

# DEEP RED A · L · E · R · T

NUMBER 1

FALL 1991

4.95

The Return of  
**LUCIO FULCI**

Finally...  
**THE FEEBLES**

The Gutting of  
**LEATHERFACE**

**All  
New!**

**SKINNY  
PUPPY**

**PIECE O' MIND**

Jim Van Bebber

**CHARLIE'S FAMILY**

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### 3 PIECE O' MIND

Uncut, uncensored!

The continuing search for the Bloody Grail.

### 13 HAND IT TO REMO

What do you say to a One-Armed Executioner?

### 16 GUINEA PIGS SPILL PINK BLOOD

Steve Bissette digs up the bloody roots of the notorious Japanese pseudo-snuff films.

### 19 KETCHUM, CUT'EM AND KILL 'EM . . . SLOWLY!

Many have called OFF SEASON the "Ultimate Horror Novel . . ." find out why.

### 24 SKINNY PUPPY

The band that bites the hand that feeds it!

### 27 VANBEBBER'S FAMILY

The director of DEAD BEAT AT DAWN discusses the ultimate Manson massacre.

### 32 NO ROOM FOR THE DAMNED: ROADKILL - THE LAST DAYS OF JOHN MARTIN

Bissette's guided tour of 13 minutes of pure cinematic hell.

### 36 THE GUTTING OF LEATHERFACE

What really happened to TEXAS CHAINSAW 3 on its way to the big screen.

### 42 GORE SCOREBOARD

The Feebles, Fulci, and Laughing/Screaming dead guys.

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# PIECE O' MIND



Well, fuckin' A, pardners! And, a shit-howdy welcome to the first-ever, NC-17 version of "Piece O' Mind!" Well, wait just a minute, here . . . That's not entirely true. They all started out unrated, but somewhere between my pen and the news rack at your corner Stop N' Go, things always got tidied up a bit. Oh, I'm not really complaining; Shoo-ish, I'm bigger than that (I hope). It's not like it's a First Amendment kind of thing; and surely, the literary world has not been deprived of any penetrating prose, it's just that terms like fuckwad, dicklick, shit-scarfer or

BY CHAS. BALUN

fart-sucking sycophant most certainly have their place as condiments in my ever-simmering guttersnipe stew. In fact, I often depend on shit like that to pepper some puerile prose and to heighten the bite of a meatless metaphor—I'll admit to that, sure; but when you're conscientiously dissecting cinematic tripe like *Howling V*, *Jarvis Takes Manhattan*, or *Fright House*, one's printable vocabulary seems woefully inadequate. Any-

"... when you're conscientiously dissecting cinematic tripe like *Howling V*, *Jason Takes Manhattan*, or *Fright House*, one's printable vocabulary seems woefully inadequate."

way, here it is, in all its resplendent four and twelve-letter glory, the completely uncut, unedited, director's print of "Piece O' Mind."



Since my announced "sabbatical" from my *Fango* and *GoreZone* duties, very little has happened—on the surface, anyway—to give one faith that this will be a banner year for the horror film. But, there's a key phrase here, because much has happened, and is happening, right now, beneath, behind, and parallel to the easily apparent. The stuff's a little harder to dig up; you'll have to apply yourself a bit more, but I think you'll be pleased with the fecundity of the newly-uncarthed soil. It's full of worms—and that's a damn fine sign.

Since the contemporary horror film is in no real danger of imminent extinction, perhaps a temporary "lull" in genre activity (especially on the independent front) can even be viewed as a positive force for change. The slack time has given a lot of us reasons to look elsewhere—places other than the multi-plexes, local video chains and cable outlets—for the Bloody Grail we so desperately yearn for. And, quite frankly, I grew weary

of hearing the same old alarmist shit, even when it had originated from my own pen! Sounding like some whiny, crusty ol' burnout, "Piece O' Mind" began droning on more like a real piece o' shit. I like to think that what I've uncovered during a recent safari to the hinterlands will begin to remind you of just what it is we're here for, anyway.

While I virtually abandoned all hope of ever renting anything with guls-to-burn from my neighborhood video outlets, I repeatedly turned to another marketplace I had grown familiar with since the old hippie days—the "black market." And, like the highs brought back then for a couple of bucks (and let me tell you, 75¢ worth of unadulterated Orange Sunshine was indeed, a frightful bargain), today's crop of uncut foreign and domestic "alternative market" chunkblowers can still provide quite a rush for the exploitation junkie. Were it not for this genre drought, I would probably not have been the least bit interested when my friend, Bob Kurtzman (he of the "K" in KNBFX), handed me a cassette and insisted, "you gotta see this." Boy, times must have been bad indeed; it was not only a Chinese gangster flick, but a teeth-grinding 12th generation dupe that wasn't even subtitled! Just what the holy fuck has all this come to? Remaining unconvinced, I tossed it onto my pile of other get-to-it-later Asian oddities like *Centipede Horror*, *Guts of a Virgin*, and *Man Behind the Sun 731* and resumed my hunt for something with zombies, cannibals, crazed surgeons, or at least carnivorous mutants on-the-loose... anything but what was it? *A Better Tomorrow*? No, it wasn't even that, it was the sequel! I have seen it since, and subsequently have had to gnosh heartily on some of my own words. *Tamorrow's* director, one John Woo,



"... cooler heads will see, that boiled down to basics, *Silence of the Lambs* is merely a pricey slasher in sheep's clothing."

is quite simply the most talented, audacious and inspired exploitation presence since Sam Raimi. Imagine a Peckinpah crossed with a Raimi and seasoned with a little Scorsese and you'll begin to get the picture. His other films, including the recently released *The Killer* and *A Bullet in the Head*, contain some of the most jaw-dropping, heart-



pounding, transcendently beautiful action sequences ever committed to film. They are all ferociously violent pictures—hundreds of rounds of gunfire are exchanged at the slightest provocation—but they lack the tired, cynical mean-spiritedness found in the

"The stuff's a little harder to dig up; you'll have to apply yourself a bit more, but I think you'll be pleased with the fecundity of the newly unearthed soil. It's full of worms--and that's a damn fine sign."

perfunctory massacres seen in such mainstream body-count films as *RoboCop 2*, the *Lethal Weapon* series, *Total Recall* or *Terminator 2*.

The brilliance of Woo's directorial vision led me to sample some of the other Asian video cuisine growing moldy next to my screening copies of *Warworks 2*, *Curse 3* and *Amityville 4*. Well, *Man Behind the Sun 731*, a sadistic barbaric, quasi-atrocity film about secret experiments carried out on Chinese prisoners by a desperate Japanese army, almost made me renounce my recently-acquired Oriental fetish right away. I chipped a tooth the first time I saw the frostbite victim stripped of her flesh after plunging her frozen arms into a vat of hot water. The autopsies performed on still-breathing children forced bile into the throat but the most unconscionable act occurs when a real cat is tossed into a rat-packed room and bitten to death amidst the giggles of the High Imperial Command. Fortunately, nearly all the pseudo-atrocity footage falls safely within the realm of the special effect, but a couple of questionable sequences remain that will perpetually vex one's conscience.

*Centipede Horror, We Are Going to Eat You, The Devil, and Guts of a Virgin* are more safely ensconced as geek-show diversions but the Japanese *Guinea Pig* series again raises some serious doubts as to where exploitation ends and gore-nography begins. As it turns out, there are at least nine episodes in the series, several of which are now reportedly banned in Japan, but few pack the visceral wallop of the first three chapters. *The Flower of Flesh and Blood* is probably the most notorious; showing in explicit and painstaking detail, the slow dismemberment, evisceration and decapitation of a young woman by a babbling, gnarly-toothed Samurai psychopath. Other episodes dwell on torture; including needles-in-the-eyes, beatings, burnings, fingernail-yanking, vice-grip abuse and sledge hammer discipline. It's a relief then, that the series gets cornier as it progresses, until finally, the chuckles come faster than the chunkblowing. Remember now, the recent genre situation and its attending circumstances literally forced me into this creepy conundrum. It was either *Graveyard Shift 2: The Understudy*, *Witchcraft 3* or Charles Band's *Crash and Burn* (which incidentally, I misidentified as a documentary of Empire Pictures), that made me watch this stuff. It just couldn't be helped.

Further research led me to the shores of New Zealand, though via a Japanese import laser disc, where Peter Jackson's uproariously perverse puppet massacre, *Meet the Feebles* was finally making an appearance. Everything you have heard about this film is undeniably and wickedly true. It is every bit as inventive, hysterical and over-the-top as *Bad Taste*, his debut feature. Jackson is truly one of the most innovative, innately gifted and underrated

**IF YOU LOVED  
'DAWN OF THE DEAD,'  
YOU'LL JUST EAT UP  
'ZOMBIE'!**



# **ZOMBIE**

**...THE DEAD ARE AMONG US!**

Jerry Gross presents "ZOMBIE" starring Tise Farrow • Ian McCulloch  
• Richard Johnson • Al Cliver • Directed by Lucio Fulci • Color by Metro Color

There is no explicit sex in this picture.  
However, there are scenes of violence which may be considered shocking.  
No one under 17 will be admitted.



"Prior to Soviet President Gorbachev's sweeping social and political reforms of the late 80's, horror films were reviled as filth from the decadent West and as verboten as hardcore pornography. Man, something's happening here . . . "

auteurs of the genre. But this too shall change.

For those of you who have harbored a sentimental fascination with the works of various Italian goremeisters, the late 80s and early 90s have shown considerable promise for yet another decade of unabashed exploitation fare. Though most fans enamored by Lucio Fulci's classic, early 80's oeuvre have expressed varying levels of disappointment with unfocused efforts like *Murderock*, *The Devil's Honey* and *Aenigma*, hopes for a triumphant resurrection were rekindled recently by the release on Japanese laser disc of both *Nightmare Concert* (aka *Cat In The Brain*) and the *Beyond*-flavored *Demonia*. Even the broadly panned *Zombi 3* (that's the spelling used) had its moments of pure Fulcification; much of the blame for the film's relatively inert state must be shouldered by co-director and card-carrying hackmeister, Bruno Mattei (Vincent Dawn), whose interminable, butt-numbing zombie snoozer *Hell of the Living Dead* (U.S. title: *Night of the Zombies*) forced even the most committed deadophiles to re-examine their lives and re-assess their abuse of their leisure time.

However, the Spaghetti Splat-ter tradition lives on in Andreas Marfori's uneven, but exhilarating *Evil Clutch*, Clyde Anderson's (yep, the *Monster Dog* man himself) *After Death* (also released in some circles as *Zombie 4*), and es-

pecially in newcomer Mariano Baino's electrifying debut effort, the 21 minute, Argento-drenched homage, *Caracula*. Keep an eye peeled (you know what I mean) for this guy; the pre-credit sequence of this amazingly slick, atmospheric chiller manages to be both grotesque and gorgeous at the same time—but, its message is crystalline: this is indeed, the arrival of a major new talent. DEEP RED Overseas correspondent, John Martin (who has a bit part in the film), now reports that Baino is hard at work on his first feature-length film, *Dark Waters*, so watch this space for further details.

Both Dario Argento and Michele Soavi continue to enjoy relatively uninterrupted periods of productivity (*The Church*, *Two Evil Eyes*, *The Sect* and Argento's as yet untitled U.S. feature) and Hollywood-based Southgate Entertainment has broken the blockade of Italian imports by releasing *The Church* and announcing plans for a September premiere of *Opera* (now called *Terror at the Opera*).

In Germany, subversive no-budget auteur, Jorg Buttgerreit has reportedly had a print of his brand new, taboo-tweaker, *Nekromantik 2*, confiscated in Munich—reminding us once again of both the power of the medium and the inherent fear of same by this New World Order. In Buttgerreit's case, the actual critical merit of his work is almost supplementary to his real contribution to the genre—that of

## Buttgereit's CORPSE FUCKING ART



## NEKROMANTIK 2



proving his little, backyard Super 8 corpse-fucking epic could deliver the cum-shot heard 'round the world at a time when real screen shocks were in alarmingly short supply.

And even in Mother Russia, Moscow crowds packed the 1200 seat Espace-Mircinema to applaud the premiere of *A Lust for Passion*—the first-ever major horror film to debut in a country that had altogether banned the genre until just recently. Prior to Soviet President Gorbachev's sweeping social and political reforms of the late 80s, horror films were reviled as filth from the decadent West and as verboten as hardcore pornography. Man, something's happening here . . .

On the domestic front, despite a blue ribbon box office performance by *Silence of the Lambs*, it still appears doubtful that a sudden renaissance in high-profile horror films will erupt any time soon. When all the hoopla dies down, and the last of the foreign pay-per-view cable rights have been cashed and counted, cooler heads will see,

that boiled down to basics, *Silence of the Lambs* is merely a pricey slasher in sheep's clothing. And, just try duplicating that film's impeccable formula: healthy, major-studio financing; Oscar-caliber talent; a keenly aware, hip director and a screenplay based on a best-selling novel from an author with a history of big-screen success (*Black Sunday*, *Manhunter*). But shit, even that's OK. I never expected Universal or Tri-Star or BigBux Studios to knock my dick into the dirt anytime soon anyway. But, fortunately, there are some signs of a modest revival on the independent front as evidenced by the encouraging commentary from directors Jeff Burr and Jim VanBebber (seen elsewhere in this issue), so there appears to be no reason for genre fanciers to roll up their tents and surrender to cable repeats of *The Day and Nights of Molly Dodd*—just yet, anyway.

My current, somewhat guarded state of checky optimism has no doubt been affected by not only my intensive search into the netherlands of the gore film, but



Mariano Baino, director of *CARLYNGLA*, the Maestro, and *DEEP RED* overseas correspondent John Marín.



obsession. murder. madness.

MARIO & VITTORIO CECCHI GORI present

Dario Argento  
terror at the opera

a film written, produced and directed by DARIO ARGENTO  
STORY: SERGIO CATTOLINI WILLIAM WINDHAM SCREENPLAY: SERGIO CATTOLINI  
script by SERGIO CATTOLINI and DARIO ARGENTO MUSIC BY ENZO ANGILERI

TEROR AT THE OPERA with CRISTINA ROCOLAN and EMANUELE  
CRISTINA ROCOLAN and EMANUELE CATTOLINI photography ROBERTO TAVONI (S.C.)  
EDITED BY CATTOLINI AND ARGENTO DIRECTED BY DARIO ARGENTO  
Copyright © 1980 by New Line Productions, Inc.

by two instances involving spontaneous self-realization. Cosmic Moment One: I simply, and suddenly grew bored with my spiteful, nagging attitude towards every film that wasn't *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Howling* or *Re-Animator*. And, Cosmic Moment Two: I had an especially revealing acid-flashback. . . . I was back in '69, frying on some 12-way microdot and on my way to the county premiere of *Easy Rider* when I suddenly remember what Bob Dylan (who, among Salvador Dali, Jonas Salk and Jimi Hendrix, I consider the artists of this century) had said about the film's climactic shootings. Originally, Dylan was to have contributed the song "It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding," to this soon-to-be countercultural colossus, but backed out at the last minute when he saw the final cut of the film. At first, it seemed as though Dylan was disappointed with the sound of his vocal and his harmonica but it was subsequently

reported that he objected to the fatalistic ending. Apparently Dylan had insisted that he could not be a part of something that ended without offering up one shred of hope for the future. He had expressed feelings to those close to him that it would be impossible for him to live in a world like that. Roger McGuinn was later called, and it's his version of the song heard on the film's soundtrack.

Hmmmmmm . . . It was also Dylan who said, "He not busy being born is busy dying. . ." Maybe it just took me twenty years to get the hint.



**WARNING!**

IF

THE ABSORBAL LOVE  
IN A SEX-PSYCHO  
FRIGHTENS YOU...  
**STAY AWAY!**

LYNN HART, THE STRANGE

**LOVE  
EXORCIST**

**AN ADVENTURE  
IN TERROR!**

First a whisper in the shadows,  
then a scream of mortal agony.

**BEWARE! Rhonda  
has left no grave.**

**THE DEATHMASTER**

# HAND IT TO REMO

## What Do You Say To A One-Armed Executioner?

by Shane Dallman



In case any of you got the wrong idea from my initial installment, I do not intend to subject you to column after column of nothing but cinematic hand removals. That doesn't carry a stand-up act on its own, and there's plenty more I feel the need to deal with, anyway. Nevertheless, in the spirit of a good dessert, I'll make a point of wrapping up with a small gourmet selection of choice de-handings in every case.

This time around, I'd like to provide a service and answer some of the questions that have no doubt occurred to everyone who's rented *The Gates of Hell* on Paragon Video and actually watched all the trailers at the beginning of the tape. You probably already know what I'm talking about—it's that trailer for *The One-Armed Executioner*. As with all of Paragon's previews, this features several

glimpses of the actual title card of the film. But just a minute here—what is that hazy image lurking behind the title? I know we're communicating here, and I know that you, just as I, have put that sucker on freeze-frame and stared at it for minutes (hours?) on end, trying to divine the truth of what's on the screen.

Stare as long as you want. The trailer is not about to give up its secrets. It's designed to make you rent the movie, after all. But it's not as if that particular title will pop up anywhere you want it to, is it? The search can be utterly maddening, in fact. Yet the tape *does* exist—I finally found it—and I will now relieve the tormented minds of any of you who haven't.

In order to rent this tape, I had to actually leave the horror section of my store and check some of the other shelves. The horrified clerks, knowing me only too well, were convinced that I had finally "lost it," and fell all over themselves trying to help me through my "attack." No gentle ex-



planation that it wasn't a horror movie could loosen my grip on the cassette once I seized on it, and the final desperate assurance that if I "didn't like it," I "didn't have to pay for it" drew only a distant nod. The answer was in my grasp. And the mystery image behind the opening title of *The One Armed Executioner* is . . .

. . . a midget drowning in a phone booth. Yep, that's it. He's one of the "good guys," and before the titles start he's in a phone booth making a report on the "bad guys." But the phone booth is inconveniently located on a pier, and when the bad guys catch up with the midget, they jam a broomstick through the door handles and, oblivious to the midget's cry of "Hey, I want out of here!," push the booth into the water. Roll credits.

So what does the One-Armed Executioner have to do with his? He's in the police station when the news concerning the fate of the midget comes through. His chief announces, "I want to know what he's been doing the last few days." (I thought, "That's easy—he was going 'glub-blub-blub-glub!'") Given the assignment while both of his arms are still intact, our hero runs afoul of the villains, who attempt to discourage him from the case by wiping out his family and removing his left arm—the character's a "lefty," so the actor can still use his right arm in the rest of the movie. This sets the stage for what has to be the most single most sensitive line I've ever heard. As

our one-armed hero lies in his hospital bed, having been removed from the force his former chief lets him know that while he feels sorry for him, the case is still police business, wrapping up his speech with "... so if you have any ideas about personal revenge, just remember . . . *hands off!*"

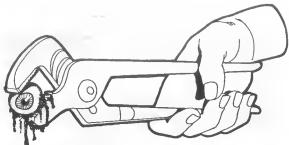
Speaking of which . . .

## HANDS OFF

This issue's selections include an acknowledgement of both *Evil Dead* films. Number One, of course, features the classic (reportedly improvised) moment in which one of the ghouls has her hand almost but not quite severed by a sword, which remains stuck in her wrist. Recalling many frontiersmen's stories of wild animals caught in traps, she proceeds to gnaw her own hand off at the wrist, effectively freeing himself with only a slight diminishment of her destructive potential. Bravo!

The follow-up film features Bruce Campbell removing his own possessed hand with a chainsaw, true, but this scene (though I loved the movie) doesn't quite make it. Seems Sam Raimi and company were originally in the position of having to shoot for an





"R" rating; and while this ultimately changed, this is one of the few scenes to suffer from the original arrangement—hence, the actual moment of removal takes place offscreen. C'est la vie.

Juan Piquer Simon's *Slugs* (1987) caught my attention with a bit in which a fellow decides to do some work in his greenhouse. Trouble is, the title creatures have taken up residence there, and a few of them have found their way into one of his work gloves. Unable to remove the slugs (or the glove, for that matter), the pain-crazed gardener resorts to some impromptu self-surgery, fully *on screen* this time around.

A similar sequence takes place in the 1988 remake of *The Blob*. The old hobo who has the misfortune to become the monster's discoverer and first victim is encountered by the protagonists on a lonely road. His hand has been engulfed by the hungry protoplasm,<sup>6</sup> and he's trying to get ahead of it with a hatchet! He, however, unlike Bruce Campbell and *Slug's* gardener, is not successful, as the Blob slides up to seal the cut before the hobo can deepen it. Points for trying though, guy, points for trying.

That's all for now, but there's always more where that came from—and remember, I *do* take requests, and I'll do it all . . . single handedly!



死霊のはらわた



NEXT  
ISSUE:

REMO D. MEETS  
THE CHLOROPHYLL  
MAN!



# GUINEA PIGS spill pink blood

By S. R. Bissette

Beloved blood brother and amigo Chas. Balun had an engaging essay in the last *Deep Red Special* dedicated to the hideous Japanese splatter-porn *Guinea Pig* movies. As always, Chas' heart and words were in the right place, and it was a lively, honest, and compelling piece . . .

. . . but his eyes were on the wrong horizon.

One of the *Guinea Pig* series, *Flower of Flesh and Blood*, is an appalling chronicle of the methodical ritualised one-hour torture, dismemberment, death, and devouring of a young Japanese woman at the bloody hands of a samurai-helmoted lunatic artist. The special effects (and they are effects, as the subsequent "Making of *Guinea Pig*" short demonstrated—these are not "snuff films") are unnervingly realistic, lending a nauseating intensity to this monotonous, humorless exercise. Western viewers might consider *Guinea Pig* an excessive distillate of *The Collector* by way of Joe Spinell's *Maniac*, but such is not the case.

Chas attempted to make sense of the *Guinea Pig* series within the context of our Western culture, though it is a peculiarly Eastern, and very specifically a Japanese, genre. In terms of both its violence and its eroticism, it is a completely alien experience to Western minds. Within its own culture, however, *Flower of Flesh and Blood* and its *Guinea Pig* companions

are clearly the latest incarnations of the "pink" film genre, with their own peculiar heritage, formulas, and niche in the Japanese popular culture.

Phil Hardy's seminal *The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies* acknowledges, but does not name, the genre. Japanese scholar Donald Richie once referred to them as "eroductions" (*Film Comment*, Jan.-Feb. 1973), an evocative description of both their erotic subtext and *reductio ad absurdum* storylines. These are in fact the *pinku eiga*, or pink film, which grew out of the low budget fringes of the Japanese cinema industry in the early to mid-60s.

Originally in black and white, and sometimes featuring color shots or



sequences, the pink films were usually claustrophobic, sadomasochistic semi-pornographic melodramas in which an unbalanced man, or men, kidnap and sadistically torture a woman, or women.

These voyeuristic rape psychodra-



mas begun with titles like *Dream of the Red Room* and *Daydream* (both 1964), and revelled in a disturbingly stark, eroticized simplicity. In many, the torturers are school boys or college students, the women housewives; in others, the tormentor is an artist, as in Yasuzo Masumura's *Moju* (1969), *Flower of Flesh and Blood* and an even stranger Guinea Pig entry, *Live Mermaid In A Manhole*, also feature artists as their sadistic leads. Their formula of ritualised violence culminates with the woman either dying (*Secret Act Inside Walls*, 1965, etc.), only to be replaced with another victim (as in *Flower of Flesh and Blood's* final shot), or escaping their bonds to kill their tormentors, who strangely welcome death (as in *The Embryo Hunts In Secret*, 1966; *Violated Women In White*, 1967; etc.), or end in death and suicide for all (*Go, Go You Who Are a Virgin For the Second Time* and *Moju*, both 1969).

One of the earliest pinku eiga, Takechi Tetsuji's *Black Snow* (1965),

was brought to trial under Japanese "public indecency" laws. The artistic community rallied behind the film, defending its political content (the plot concerns an impotent boy who works on U.S. military bases, and ends up being killed by American soldiers), and the charges were dismissed. This legal sanction only fueled the proliferation of the genre, and "by the mid-1960s, pink films accounted for fully one-half of [Japanese] domestic production" (David Esser's excellent *Eros Plus Massacre*, Indiana University Press, 1988, pg. 98).

Nagisa Oshima's internationally renowned *In The Realm of the Senses* (1976) also survived legal prosecution in Japan and other countries, praised as an important artistic achievement in spite of its unflinching blend of explicit sex, violence, and death. Though Oshima's masterpiece—in which a sadomasochistic relationship between man and woman culminates in the man dying during orgasm, after which the woman castrates him and keeps his organ with her until her arrest—arguably transcends its roots, it too, is a pinku eiga, and hence kin to the rude, crude, and lewd Guinea Pig horrors.

Though the pinku eiga are typically contemporary in their trappings, there were also a number of borderline pink movies that were period pieces, such as Akira Inoue's *Women's Prison* (1967) and Terup Ishii's anthology *The Joys of Torture* (1968, also featuring a mad tattoo artist in one of its four episodes).

Few of these films have ever been seen in the U.S., hence the culture shock induced by viewing of *Guinea Pig* or its hideous ilk is quite understandable. When director Koji Wakamatsu screened *The Embryo Hunts In Secret* at the Fourth International Experimental Film Festival in 1967, the horrified Western audiences attacked the screen and tried to stop the projection of the film. Wakamatsu declared, "I want very much to let the world know that such



fantastic films are being produced in Japan one after another (as quoted in *Film Is: The International Free Cinema*, Stephen Dwoskin, The Overlook Press, 1975, pg. 100).

As the *Guinea Pig* series proves, they still are.

[Also recommended: Asian horror and fantasy special issue of Tom Welser and David Todarello's *Naked! Screaming! Terror!* #4/5, \$5 postpaid from Kronos Productions, P.O. Box 67, Oberlin Ohio 44074-0067; write for availability.]

.....

# JIM VANBEBBER

## ☠☠☠ Promo Reel ☠☠☠

complete & uncut

ROAD KILL

THE LAST DAYS OF  
JOHN MARTIN

\$20 USA

\$25 Foreign

\*Postage

is included

CHUNK  
BLOWER

(trailer)

CHARLIE'S  
FAMILY

(trailer)

## Mercury Films



73 Westpark Road  
Dayton, OH 45459

This high quality, 20 minute promo tape has been struck directly from the original master. Each has been numbered and signed by the director.

# KETCHUM: CUT 'EM AND KILL 'EM... SLOWLY!

BY CHAS. BALUN

Still, to this day, a good ten years after I'd first read a terrifying little novel with a deceptively obtuse title, I approach the "K" section of my local bookstores with unbridled optimism and delirious anticipation. It doesn't even matter if I'd already visited the joint earlier in the week—I am still inexorably drawn to the same row of books. And, it's almost always the same, month after month. A brief glimmer of hope when I spy *Butcher's Theater* . . . but alas, it's by Jonathan Kellerman; and when Kerouac's *Visions of Cody* pops up, I know I'm almost there. The next two entries are crucial. When I finger the thick spine of Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, I realize that it's now or never. Shit! "King" is next on the shelf. Double-fuck it! It's a misplaced Tabitha King novel, yet! All hope should be lost at this point, especially seeing 8 or 10 feet of shelf space devoted to The King's compost, but I always tell myself that perhaps a careless clerk has merely shifted the title down a few letters. Usually, when I get to Koontz, and see pants-wetting titles like *Whispers*, *Strangers* or (shudder) *The Bad Place*, I formally abandon all hope. Is there some kind of metaphor here? No, probably not, but it never hurts to read more into it—makes 'em feel more profound, and painfully clever . . . kind of like a real

multi-level type of guy, y'know?

The elusive author I'm stalking is one Jack Ketchum; but the search never really ends there, as that moniker is merely a nom de plume for an aggressively low-profile novelist named Dallas Mayr. The plot thickens, pards. And, yes, I do check the "M's," too, but it never ever works.

For those of you who have read Ketchum's scorching, razor-sharp first novel, *Off Season*, there is no sense in explaining the motivation behind my quest—you already know. For the uninitiated, this Ketchum Kult stuff may take some explaining. True, *Off Season* has been out-of-print for over a decade now; he's certainly never been a flavor-of-the-month, and they've never even made a movie out of one of his books. In fact, I wouldn't have

## OFF SEASON

JACK KETCHUM

He holds the high  
ground. They're  
trapped in the fire

ground. They're  
zone. There is no...

# COVER



A NOVEL BY  
**JACK KETCHUM**

AUTHOR OF OFF SEASON

paid the 1980 release of *Off Season* any mind either, had it not been for Stanley Wiater's compelling and unabashed praise for it in an early edition of *Fangoria* magazine. At that time, people were telling me that the scariest thing they had ever read was Danny Torrance's confrontation with the wet, dead hag in the hotel room in Stephen King's wildly overrated *The Shining*. So I read it. They lied. And now, along comes this new guy's first novel, billed as "The Ultimate Horror Novel," and here's yet another gushing testimonial. OK . . . I found it at my local Crown Books—cover price \$2.50, everyday Crown discount price \$2.15—read it in one fevered sitting and . . . here's another gushing testimonial, OK?

*Off Season* is the toughest, most ferociously-intense, gut-churning horror novel I have ever read. And I've read more than my fair share. This is one that'll blister the paint right off of your walls, jab glass shards under your fingernails and shrink your nuts up with testicle-tightening terror rarely unleashed on the printed page. *Off Season* is a stripped-down, high-octane Formula one racer that roars off the page at 12:26 a.m. on September 12, 1981, and crashes head-on with most of your worst fears and nightmares before finally expiring in an orgy of torture, violence, defilement and death some 48 hours and 184 pages later. The tale is certainly simple enough: a band of half-human, mutant, degenerate rural cannibals lay siege to some city folk vacationing at an isolated cabin near a seemingly quiet Maine beach town. It's sort of like *The Hills Have Eyes*—cranked up to the fourth power. Many of the images indelibly burned into your brain are simply unforgettable; victims are hung and gutted like pigs; others are cut to pieces—slowly and deliberately; half-eaten, roasted torsos turn on spits over crackling campfires, and wolf-like packs of feral children tear their human prey to shreds and then fight

over the scraps. When it all ends, you're plenty grateful; that level of intensity is pretty exhausting even for the most jaded gorehound. You're undeniably relieved that the book is well under 200 pages, too. . . . Jeezus! What a movie this would have made!

So run, don't walk, to your nearest used bookshop and seek out this thin, unprepossessing little black book with the thread o' the red running down its stark cover and enter into the Kuli with the rest of us.

Fortunately, Ketchum was not merely another flash-in-the-pan either. Though his follow-up book was a disappointing, rather routine haunted house-with-a-big-secret potboiler, subsequent efforts have shown flashes of the brilliance so effortlessly trotted out in his freshman offering.

Though both *Cover* (1987, Warner) and *She Wakes* (1989, Berkley) were more mainstream suspense-thrillers, each showed that Ketchum was polishing his craft, expanding his parameters, and sharpening his story-telling abilities. *Cover* is a glossy, full-bodied thriller about a bunch of comfortably rich, snooty city slickers who get lost in the woods and then hunted down by a crossbow-wielding 'Nam

# THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

A NOVEL BY

## JACK KETCHUM



ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

THE MOST HORRIFYING NOVEL OF THE YEAR!

By the Author of the classic  
OFF ALIVE

Jack Ketchum



The ultimate huntress.  
Humans are her prey...

burn-out when they stumble upon his hidden pot stash. Suspense is the theme here, and though it ends with a whimper instead of a bang, the proceedings are enlivened considerably by several clever and bloody, booby-trapped death scenes that recall the well-Seasoned Ketchum touch.

*She Wakes* is a sprawling, ambitious work about an ancient evil resurfacing on some supposedly sacred spots in the Greek Isles. It's written like a supernatural travelogue with splatter and the confusing, shape-shifting pseudo-delusions of the lead succubus are tough to unravel. It's got a big, blustery, quasi-*Poltergeist* climax and an epilogue that stresses the power of love, forgiveness and redemption. H-m-m-m.

The publication of *The Girl Next Door* (1989, Warner) marked not only a frightening return to form, but a chilling descent back into the hellish territory first mined in *Off Season*. The book sports an uncharacteristically lame cover illustration of a pig-tailed, saddle-shoed cheerleader with a (eck!) skeletal face. Emblazoned on her sweater are the initials "KJ." Could it be a thinly-veiled nod to the author? Could it be . . . Satan? Nothing really prepares you for the depraved, wanton savagery and the crushing, suffocating sense of fatalism suffused throughout this cum-curdling, unblinking account of torture, rape, humiliation and death. Oh, have I mentioned the fact that the victims include two young sisters? One of whom is *crippled*, wears leg braces and is all of *eleven* years old?

It is mighty tough to unreservedly recommend this book, despite the obvious evidence that it is easily Ketchum's most mature, well-written effort to date. In stark, clear-eyed prose, Ketchum relates the first person account of a young boy, caught in the cusp of adolescence, who reluctantly, then willingly, participates in a debased frenzy of violence that even manages to eclipse many of the hair-

raising, dick-shriveling antics of his first book. This is *Stand By Me* by the Marquis de Sade, filtered through the sociopathic sensibilities of a young John Wayne Gacy. With little spared for the imagination, the girls are whipped, beaten with shovels, cut with knives, burned with irons and cigarettes, raped and forced to eat dog shit. And worse . . .

This is incredibly mean, prickly stuff and the less-than-hopeful epilogue hints that even the most reformed of the perpetrators has been cursed for life to succumb repeatedly to the lure of his darkest impulses. Because Warner Books released *The Girl Next Door* under the banner of "psychological (!) horror," one wonders just how many of its editors actually read the entire manuscript. I had begged for a Ketchum Comeback for years, but what I got with *The Girl* was like a frothing, David Hess-styled journal of the parts that were cut out of the unrated *Last House on the Left*.

So, the next time someone tells you about this really, really scary part in the next Kingootz' Klassic, just have them turn to page 166 of *The Girl Next Door* and read it . . . and weep—for the girls, and for all of us.





"One of the first songs I ever wrote was entitled 'Canine,' about the world as viewed from a dog's eyes," said Kevin Ogilvie, front man for the industrial shock rock group Skinny Puppy. "A dog that eats whatever its master puts before him, unquestioningly. Eventually, the dog turns against its master and kills him."

Ogilvie, speaking over the phone from his Vancouver flat was explaining the meaning of his band's name that at first seems like an odd, distaff joke considering the music Skinny Puppy produces. "When we formed eight years ago, we were totally serious. We had important things to say. Now, we don't hold out much hope for the human race or the people who govern us. Those in power always abuse the rest of us. There's no point in being concerned with what those in power wield over us." Ogilvie goes on to quote Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, "the horror, the horror" with a wry chuckle.



Michael Jackson's *Off the Wall*, if they are to understand the particular branch of din the Pups produce should acquaint themselves with the term of "industrial" music. Industrial is the bastard child of hardcore punk and disco, whose influences on mainstream culture can be felt as far away as the background music in the latest aspirin commercial.

In short, *industrial*, as practiced by Skinny Puppy and their musical contemporaries such as Ministry, Pankow, My Life with the Thrill Kill Cult, Level 42, Nine Inch Nails *et al* weds the harshness and dissonance of punk with

**GREG GOODSSELL**

# Skinny Puppy

*bites the hand that feeds it*

Skinny Puppy's music, stage show, and album graphics in reality give little for the casual listener to chuckle over. Song titles such as "Chainsaw," "Serpents," "Spahn Dirge," "Assimilate," "The Choke" on albums entitled *Mind*, *the Perpetual Intercourse*, *Rabies* and *Too Dark Park* are not the type of tunes one slips over the church's loud-speakers during Sunday brunch. At least if the church doesn't worship more than one God, anyway.

Those whose musical tastes end abruptly with Emerson, Lake and Palmer and haven't paid much attention to popular music since the release of

the boogie woogie beat of disco, all of it bound with the over riding philosophical concern that modern life (as we know it) is *bloody fucking awful!*

This doesn't preclude eclecticism in this particular musical genre. Why, the very forebears of this brand o' noise Throbbing Gristle (English, late '70's, early '80's) began their career with cacophonous numbers such as "Slug Bait," "Hamburger Lady," (about a burn victim) and "Five Knuckle Shuffle" and bowed out with melodic love songs such as "Distant Dreams, Part 2" and "Hot On the Heels of Love." Likewise, Skinny Puppy divides its time with songs that

... industrial ... weds the harshness and dissonance of punk with the boogie woogie beat of disco, all of it bound with the over riding concern that modern life (as we know it) is bloody fucking awful!

are either boiler room noisy to muzak ethereal, sometimes both at once (as in their transcendently beautiful "Assimilate.")

"Sampling," the use of musical riffs and bits of recorded dialogue is a big part of Skinny Puppy's arsenal as well; in the manner of William S. Burroughs, the bits of audio utilized are always found, never acquired. An early hit, "Stairs and Flowers" features a man and wife arguing over flower beds (in all likelihood cribbed from a Canadian sitcom) over a propulsive dance beat. "That song was created around a simulcast over a radio, and we built around it as we went along," says Ogilvie. Fittingly, a TV set blared in the background throughout the brief telephone conversation your writer held with him.

"You'll like the song we have on our new album, *Last Rights*. It has Timothy Leary talking about a bad acid trip," laughs Ogilvie. Yet another early hit, "The Choke" featured morbid dialogue from Roman Polanski's *The Tenant* (1979).

As you've guessed by now, the Pups have a "thing" (as most of the readers of this tome probably do) about horror movies. "We really love DEEP RED and are glad to be finally getting the recognition from the genre we all know and love." The music video clip for "Worklock," assembled with a helping hand from REDditor Chas Balun is a virtual greatest hits compilation of cinematic slaughter with clips from *The Gates of Hell*, *Suspiria*, *Eraserhead*, *Dead and Buried*, *Bad Taste*, *Combat Shock*, *Alienated States*, *Videodrome*, *Tenebrae* and *Parents*. In addition, the Skinny ones have released a limited edition CD entitled *Censor*, lambasting the efforts of the MPAA's conspiracy to

halt the evolution of the contemporary horror film. "I find the power of anyone who stops me from seeing, reading or doing what I want absolutely unacceptable," declares Ogilvie.

Ogilvie's taste in terror tends towards Italian maestros such as Fulci and Argento ("Their films are like shot in real time, very artistic") to vintage '70's sleaze such as *Deranged* (1974). "I like that one. The look is so stale and moldy."



As to be expected, the Skinny Puppy stage show strays to the grand guignol. As documented on their live show video *Is It Dead Yet?*, Ogilvie smears himself with blood, uses monstrously deformed rod puppets and stages a mock pistol execution of himself with a man trussed up in a straight jacket who was previously confined to throwing shadows on a back screen through the preceding performance. "The next tour I will have this device called The Chair of No Care, which will have these flaps that come over my face. The audience will be able

## SKINNY PUPPY

to see my most innermost thoughts on a screen while I am drenched and writhing in this steady stream of blood and gore." Bring the wife and kids.

Providing the proper musical accompaniment to Jim VanBebber's hotly anticipated *Chunk Blower*, touring with special effects whiz kid Tim "Gore" Larsen and releasing a brand new album are all slated in Skinny Puppy's near future. Although their world view is not a kinder, gentler one, this is one musical group at pains to prove that It Isn't Dead Yet.

## RABIES



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## BEYOND THE DARKNESS



# VanBebber's F·A·M·I·L·Y

by Chas. Balun

**"You're going to get your money's worth—whether your interest in the Manson saga is merely passing or obsessive. We are going to *deliver* with this one."**

**"We're going to pull the rug out from beneath the myth. We're going to knock him (Manson) off his high horse. He was a scumbag. And we're not going to let anyone forget just how hideous those crimes actually were."**

If faith, guts, and integrity were dollars, independent Ohio filmmaker Jim VanBebber could: (a) buy a 27 passenger, JetStream commuter aircraft, (b) finance *Terminator 3* out of his own pocket, (c) purchase a condo next to Axl Rose's Hollywood digs, or (d) write, direct, edit, and star in his own films until he drops dead. Hint: VanBebber still mentions filmmaking and "art" in the same breath and has gone on record saying "being an independent filmmaker is the conscious choice of a stubborn artist with a clear vision. We understand how to tap our resources and we will not stop. Ever."

While the Hollywood Meat Packing plants are looking for fresh, quality prime beef to process into multi-burger Family Paks, VanBebber remains somewhat of an anomaly on the current filmmaking scene. And, he'll remain as such, especially spouting such politically incorrect axioms as, "Everything is geared towards making money. It's sickening. If you're gonna make a film, you're making art. Be true to it." Obviously, "doing lunch," "schmoozing," and "buttkissing" are not a part of VanBebber's vocabulary.

For those unfamiliar with the work of this 26 year-old genre auteur (and you're certainly not alone), VanBebber is the writer/director/FX artist behind such films as *Deadbeef at Dawn*, *Roadkill: The Last Days of John Martin*, and the nearly-completed, Manson-inspired creepy-crawler, *Charlie's Family*. He has been making films in and around the Dayton area since the sixth grade, and was awarded a film



scholarship to Wright State for his 40 minute, Super 8 "karate rock opera," *Into the Black*, while he was still in high school. At Wright State, he and future collaborators Michael King and Marcello Games were under the tutelage of documentarians James Klein and Julia Reichert, both of whom were twice-nominated for Academy Awards for their work on *Union Maids* and *Seeing Red*. The trio's classroom projects were soon winning awards at various regional festivals, so on January 20, 1987, Asmodeus Productions was officially incorporated to allow them to continue writing, producing, directing and distributing their own films in the future. From Asmodeus





came Marcello Games' *Shattered*, Mike King's *Doper*, Marc Pittman's *Mufa*, and VanBebber's own *Roadkill* and *Deadbeat at Dawn*. Asmodeus metamorphosed into Mercury Films a year or two ago, and now producer/cinematographer King and VanBebber are wrapping *Charlie's Family*, which not-so-coincidentally, stars Marcello Games as the titular figure (aka Jesus Christ, the Devil, etc.). VanBebber is also slated to direct Plasma Films' *Chunkblower* (written for the screen by your REDitor) before starting production on the feature-length version of *The Last Days of John Martin* ("Roadkill" has been dropped as a prefix). He has also just completed "Spasmolytic," the new Skinny Puppy video produced by Plasma, and is currently shooting the gore-drenched climax to *Charlie's Family* at sites in both Ohio and Los Angeles, California.

DEEP RED caught up with VanBebber on the eve of filming the notorious Tate Massacre sequence, which incidentally, corresponds rather creepily to the actual 21st anniversary of the most famous mass murder in California's history.

DR: Were there any particular films that initially inspired you to work within the genre?

VB: When I was ten years-old, a friend and I snuck into a midnight screening of *The Last House on the Left*. Man, I just walked out of there thinking, "people should not be allowed to make films like that!" At 13, I saw *Dawn of the Dead*. It blew me away. Tom Savini's FX were a major inspiration for me to begin my own experimentations.

DR: Your first feature, *Deadbeat at Dawn*, is awfully tough to find. What happened to the distributor you signed on with?

VB: As soon as we get the bucks, we're going to try to get out of that contract. They haven't spoken with us for over four months. They won't return our phone calls. All they've really managed to do was design a real nice video box for it and to strike a new, color-corrected print of the film. I've yet to see the first dollar from its "sale." If you're interested, I suggest fans write directly to Ketchum Video, att. Nick Mercer, at 23114 Friar St., Woodland Hills, CA

91376. Here's their phone number, too. (818) 883-7360. Good luck.

DR: Isn't *Charlie's Family* a rather risky project in the wake of all the troubles with *Deadbeat*?

VB: I never think about risk. This is simply the right film for me right now.

DR: What were some of your source materials?

VB: Just about everything in print. I saw everything on tape, including Robert Hendrikson and Lawrence Merrick's *Manson*, which was an Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary. Merrick was later shot in the head—dead—by someone who had come into his office babbling about Manson and "Helter Skelter."

DR: Where does the TV mini-series, *Helter Skelter*, end, and you film begin?

VB: The TV show really didn't touch upon the heinous savagery of

the murders. We're going to show it and hold it right up under your nose. They're raw, visceral and power-packed. The Tate house is . . . unbelievable. We're going to deliver the groceries.

DR: *Helter Skelter* was mired in police and judicial procedures and never really got inside the Family. What's your angle?

VB: We never even get into the police thing. You're always with the Family . . . totally "in the Thought" as Charlie would say.

DR: What's to prevent *Charlie's Family* from making Manson some kind of kinky cult hero for a whole new generation?

VB: You mention Manson to the young kids and they think, "Yeah, that's the guy that killed all those people." But he's *not* the one. It was his band of loser kids. We're going to pull the rug out from beneath the myth. We're going to knock him off his high horse. He



was a scumbag. And, we're not going to let anyone forget just how hideous those crimes actually were.

**DR:** At one time, you said Manson would actually sing on the soundtrack for the film.

**VB:** We got the rights to six of his songs from Awareness Records. They're from the "Lie" album. They're all his own compositions and he accompanies himself on guitar. He sort of sounds like a psychedelic Johnny Cash. The Family later re-dubbed some tracks and added background vocals. Manson supposedly cut another album and had it smuggled out of prison in the early 80's.

**DR:** How far will you go with the violence? There's a helluva lot of people out there who are still pretty touchy about seeing a woman who's nine-months pregnant being gutted on camera.

**VB:** We're not showing Tate getting stabbed in the belly . . . mainly out of respect for Roman Polanski. By that time, it would be a case of overkill. It's as bloody as hell . . . we've taken the approach—So you really want to see this stuff, huh? Well, here it is!

**DR:** Are you doing the makeup FX?

**VB:** I've been doing everything so far, but we also have somebody who's handling the explosive squib effects. The murders are very graphic; heads are beaten into a pulp, throats slit and one character is shot in the cheek at point-blank range.

**DR:** What scene besides the Tate Massacre encapsulates the Manson aura?

**VB:** I think the one scene that really captures the hysteria surrounding Manson is the acid-trip-

ping sequence on the beach where he gets crucified by the Family. He's heavily into this Christ-thing, and they all used to get into these weird role-playing games while on LSD. Then they'd drink some blood and fuck like dogs. The scene is shot like something out of Dante's *Inferno*.

**DR:** After your wranglings with Ketchum Video, how are you planning to handle *Charlie's Family*?

**VB:** We're going to get it out to the critics and have it screened at a bunch of festivals before we sign it over. We're going to take our time. I've been hearing word that



the market for independents is improving now. It's certainly taken a beating in the last few years. It's just me and Mike pushing this thing now, but we've got a lot of footage and the thing moves like a motherfucker. You're going to get your money's worth—whether your interest in the Manson saga is merely passing or obsessive. We are going to deliver with this one.



**No Room for the Damned:**

# ROAD KILL

**The Last Days of John Martin**

By S. R. Bissette



In an era of jaded filmmakers, financiers, and audiences, it is almost a comfort to find there is still an item capable of galvanizing the collective revulsion of those who pride themselves on having seen it all. In the wake of *Blue Velvet*'s success, Buddy Giovanazzo (of *Combat Shock* infamy) penned the extraordinary screenplay *125 Depravity Street* only to find aghast producers slamming doors in his face at every turn. Similarly, Jim VanBebber's 14-minute promo reel for *Roadkill: The Last Days of John Martin* has provoked across-the-board revulsion, from the mortified financiers who undoubtedly question not only where their money might have gone but VanBebber's very sanity, to critic and horror historian John McCarty's (the man who coined the term "splatter movies") dismissal of it, to the disgusted *Fangoria* convention organizers who stopped a showing of *Roadkill* during one of the west coast "Weekends of Horror" (ostensibly to make room for John Buechler's self-promotional claptrap—hey, out of the way, Jimbo!). VanBebber's *Roadkill* lead, actor Mark Gillespie, couldn't handle it, letting Jim know that he wouldn't be available if the feature was ever produced.

*Roadkill* is clearly a nasty piece of work. But unlike many other low-budget horrors, it is not easily dismissed: the disdain was hard-earned, but it shouldn't join the garbage heap.

In a little over ten minutes, VanBebber tosses us into some mighty deep waters and leaves us to tread water. The camera eye opens within John Martin's home, a festering shithole rank with splashes, gobbets, chunks, bags and bins of human remains. This lanky, leering idiot cannibal pokes around the squalor, now in search of a can-opener (tucked away in a soup can brimming with offal and maggots), later trying to negotiate a shower before stepping out for the hunt. His proverbial stupor gives way only when shrieking out his frustra-

tions, screaming nonsensically at a TV which endlessly broadcasts game shows, musicals, commercials, and drivel, and—incredibly—when Martin manages to stammer out a few semi-coherent words to trick two new victims into his car. He dispatches them and drives 'em home, and is next seen busy at work in the kitchen.

By the time his female victim has the gas burners cranked up under her



in response to her pleas for mercy, even the most indulgent viewer is either groggy in the ropes or has long since left the room. "Here it is," VanBebber insists, "this is the reality of it. Take it or leave it." The only moment of questionable fantasy has us doubting our own sanity: what is that torso that still pulses and throbs in the corner?

There are clear cinematic precedents, from the first two-thirds of Eloy de la Iglesia's *La Semana del Asesino* (*The Apartment on the 13th Floor*, 1972; also pegged with the misleading moniker *Cannibal Man*) to the down-home abattoirs of Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and its entourage of sequels, imitators, and wanna-be cheapjack nightmares. None of them—including VanBebber's own features, *Deadbeat at Dawn* or the upcoming *Charlie's Family*—prepare you for *Roadkill*'s absolute ground-zero sensibility.



*Roadkill* remains only a promo reel. Alas, it may never be completed as the feature film VanBebber envisioned. It is too uncompromising, too nasty, too obsessed with its own horrors.

*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* leavened its charnel house atrocities with pitch-black; *Silence of the Lambs* would have us believe Buffalo Bill could stitch the skins of his victims together with some semblance of cleanliness observed—no fuss, no muss, no flies or real squalor. *Roadkill* offers no leavening: it's straight, no chaser. Ugly as sin, and unflinchingly vivid in rendering both the horror and the banality of it.

Quite an accomplishment in mere minutes. The ferocity of VanBebber's vision and skill is undeniable.

In his own promotional material, VanBebber emphasizes his intent by reminding us that "no matter how much you might not want to believe it, somewhere out there, John Martin lives."

As of this writing, the latest newsworthy extreme of human depravity comes from Milwaukee, Wisconsin—

Ed Gein's home state—where 31-year old Jeffrey L. Dahmer's atrocities have been unveiled. Like VanBebber's John Martin, Dahmer was living amid the routing debris of between eleven and eighteen victims who had been chopped, sawed, dissolved in vats of sulfuric acid, or partially devoured. Three heads were found in the freezer.

How did Dahmer live with such crimes, subsist on them, in a meat hell he methodically carved out of real human suffering, death, and flesh? (*Roadkill* shows us how.)

More nagging is the question of how his neighbors lived with it. Jeff Dahmer's hideous crimes were secreted in an urban apartment; for months, his neighbors endured the stench, sounds of struggles, crying, screams, buzzsaws, with nary a single complaint to local authorities. Had his latest victim failed to escape and alert the police, Dahmer's crimes might remain undetected to this day.

Despite the stench, the screams, the murders.

Not to be crass, but it is the banality of it that is so shocking. On every

conceivable level, the tolerance for the crime is astounding: the media revels in every detail with a zeal that was unthinkable in the 40s (Albert Fish), 50s (Gein), or even 60s (the Manson family), as such crimes have taken on their own sick familiarity, their own appalling banality. The day I first heard of the crimes, I overheard a comment in a restaurant dismissing the atrocities as "unimaginative," as if the reality of Dahmer's crimes should be measured against the ingenuity of a Dr. Phibes, tolerated as an undone private amusement.

*Roadkill*, however, is intolerable. VanBebber has the audacity to rub our noses in our grim fascination with the

Fishes, the Geins, the Dahmers of the world with a tactile immediacy that is damned near unbearable. There is an assaultive moral imperative at work here, which is what ultimately makes *Roadkill* such a volatile experience. In a pop culture seeking only titillation and vicarious thrills, *Roadkill* is a true offender: that which intends to genuinely outrage and upset us.

If only Dahmer's neighbor's had seen it . . .

*ROADKILL: The Last Days of John Martin* (1988, Asmodeus Productions, Inc.) Written and directed by Jim VanBebber. Produced and photographed by Mike King. Starring Mark Gillespie, Maureen Allisse, Marc Pizman.



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# THE GUTTING of LEATHERFACE

by Chas. Balun

Unfortunately, the most genuinely frightening, horrifying aspects of *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3* never made it to the screen. Lost were numerous gore scenes, critical character exposition, plot cohesiveness and the original ending of the film. But nothing compares to the cold, cynical and conniving machinations operating behind-the-scenes both during and after the actual filming of the second sequel to Tobe Hooper's unavailable 1974 masterpiece. While fans, critics, and connoisseurs of The "Saw Mythos" sat stunned in their seats at the jaw-dropping, what-the-fuck climax tacked on to Jeff (*The Offspring*, *Stepfather 2*) Burr's original cut, New Line Cinema executives were gleefully licking their chops and congratulating themselves for "saving the film." At this point, they still harbored high hopes of cultivating yet another lucrative horror franchise à la the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series.

Well, this Fall, New Line will kill off one of its major meal tickets when their venerable fast-food fearburger franchise grinds to a halt with Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare. Most fans feel as though they had already murdered another high-level horror icon with their bungled *Leatherface* so Krueger's welcome demise should prove anti-climactic to most of its intended audience.

What follows is a cautionary tale. Like it or lump it, what happened to *Leatherface* on its way to the big screen is all too indicative of the sorry state of the genre in the 90's. Your worst suspicions will be proven to be true. But, along with this sobering, sorrowful story of betrayal, corporate ass-kissing, and crass commercial manipulation comes just the tiniest spark—a minuscule flash of hope amidst the yawning, black maw—that offers a clue to the transformation of the genre in the years to come. Jeff Burr, unjustly maligned and vilified

for his work on *Leatherface*, tells a tale that may break the hearts of many devoted, quasi-religious fans, filmmakers and genre wanna-be's, but he speaks from a unique vantage point—that of One Who Knows. And despite Jesus' insistence that "the truth shall make you free," the facts in the case of *Leatherface* will most likely leaving you feeling fleeced, fucked and furious. It is for the best, however, to learn the Law of the Jungle is you wish to play ball with the beasts of the corporate filmmaking process.

Jeff Burr entered the lair with enthusiasm, boundless energy and the fervent desire that his Tale O' the Saw would return the series to its former glory. Needless to say, Burr found out fast that in the horror franchise sweepstakes, honesty, integrity and respect for both the genre and its audience were in alarmingly short supply. But instead of wallowing in apology, bitterness and regret, Burr discovered an undeniable Fact of Film Life—and used that knowledge to modify and redefine his career.

There is a lesson here, friends—addressed to all you aspiring directors, producers, writers, actors and FX artists—so learn it well and then arm yourself for the future.

"In April of '89, I had a meeting with Bob Shaye and he showed me an early draft of Dave Schow's script," says Burr. "The thing I wanted to latch on to was the family thing—that's what separates this series from any other Slasher Superstar film—the relationships within the family. It's not just the story of some idiot walking around in a mask, that's not what it's about. I also said that I was real concerned about the level of violence in the script. There were certain things I knew we just couldn't shoot because they were going for an 'R' rating, so why waste time shooting something you *know* damn well won't make it into the film?"

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**"The first question I asked was 'Who is this fuckin' family? Is it a new family? Where did they come from?'"**

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Prior to Burr's involvement with New Line, a former executive at New World Pictures was marshalling the project and had apparently instructed Schow to "write it as hard and as nasty as you can and we'll trim the script from there." Kim Henkel, scriptwriter on the original film, was also involved very early on and had already submitted his outline and treatment as well. Then, for months after their initial meeting, Burr heard absolutely nothing from Shaye concerning the project until a frantic phone call one night in late June. "My agent told me that they had already hired a director, Jonathan Betoul, who had written *The Last Starfighter*, I think, as well as directing *My Science Project* for Disney—not the most obvious choice, here—but that he had some kind of contract with Fox that he couldn't get out of. So, I go into this meeting and am introduced to the producer of *Leatherface*, Bob Engleman, and the other production executives. They say, 'Jeff, we hired this other director, but it didn't work out because of some contractual stuff. You were our second choice and we really want you to do this movie.' They told me to think about it over the weekend and then call them on Monday with my answer. There was to be just 2 1/2 weeks of pre-production—it was going to be insane," Burr now admits.

"I had just finished *Stepfather 2* but I was such a big, big fan of the first *Chainsaw* that I decided to start Monday and jump right into this thing. I

found out later that I wasn't their second choice or their third choice or even their fourth. I think I was about *twentieth*. After I'd finished the movie I found out that all these other directors had turned it down—too violent or too this and too that. They had definitely wanted John McNaughton to do it; *Henry* had not come out yet, but it was already gotten some real good press."

Being a big fan of the original, Burr expressed interest in obtaining the services of Gunnar Hansen to again essay the titular role. "I knew Gunnar, so as soon as I got the job I called him up. He wasn't being difficult but he did want a lot of money—I can't blame him for that—and he also expressed some real problems with the script, too. Lots of character stuff he felt *Leatherface* would never do. In all deference to Dave Schow, and I do like him as a writer, I know him well, the first question I asked him about the script—he couldn't answer. I said, 'Who is this fuckin' family? Is it a new family? Where did they come from? There were things I wanted to change—but there was no time—we only had one or two meetings about the script.'"

Due to the accelerated pace demanded by New Line, many of Burr's suggestions were summarily dismissed in a headlong rush to meet the self-imposed production deadlines. "We had to start shooting in early July because they had to have it out by November 3—that was the release

date—and everything had to work back from that. They had figured that would be the 'optimum time' to release this movie. Go figure."

One of the gripes expressed by many fans was that for a film entitled *Leatherface*, much more was expected of that character than turned up on the final cut. "The idea was to try and make *Leatherface* a kind of angry adolescent," opines Burr, "and there was much more family interaction in the original cut. The bottom line was that every seemingly offensive thing was cut to make it all as sanitized as possible. The problem with New Line is that everybody there pretty much hates horror films. They're worried about offending people. They're really missing the point here." Amen, bro'.

**"The problem with New Line is that everybody there . . . hates horror films."**

Further surprises awaited Burr as the film made its tortuous way into the editing room. New Line began objecting to not only what they felt was patently offensive about many of the characters, but they also began to get mighty prissy about the overall "tone" of the film. The once-graphic scenes of chainsaw splatter were cut down to a few frames here and there or else eliminated entirely. Much of the footage involving the little girl interacting with the family was pared down to the minimum until finally, New Line felt that even more extreme measures were called for. Dissatisfied with Burr's original ending and with some of the reactions to early test screenings, they initiated Plan B.

"After I had shot for about five weeks on the film—at the end of five

**"The bottom line was that every seemingly offensive thing was cut to make it as sanitized as possible."**

weeks—they fired me. They felt I was doing it too artistically or something. They wanted to bring in a second unit to finish it. New Line never told me what they were going to do about the ending. Kate Hodge finally called me up and told me this was going to happen. I mean, New Line didn't even call me to say, 'Hey, Jeff, you suck! We're not going to hire you to shoot the new ending.' So literally, I'm in a motion picture theater in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and I have no fuckin' idea how it ended! It says 'Directed by Jeff Burr' and here I am with no idea what the last five or ten minutes will be. Very, very weird experience; I'll never go through that again."

Burr's ending had Kate Hodge escape the clutches of the family and

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**"They asked if I wanted the credit, 'A Jeff Burr Film.' 'No way in hell!' I wanted my name taken off the film."**

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make it down to a dusty back road where she encounters a slowly approaching police car. The vehicle passes her and then stops. She falls to her knees, thinking the nightmare has finally ended, when she spots movement in the car's back seat. The little girl appears at the window holding one of her zombie dolls and smiles. Hodge collapses into hysterics as the camera pans down the car and locks on to the bumper sticker. It reads, "Don't Mess With Texas."

Burr also readily admits that there was yet another ending that was seriously being considered. "The real original ending had Kate make it to a police station and then start telling her story. It's an obvious set-up for num-

ber 4. You hear a chainsaw crank up somewhere in the station, like it's a conspiracy thing, like the whole town is in on it. The next one would have been about a whole town of cannibal killers."

What audiences finally got for their money was a preposterous, upbeat ending that had Ken Foree return from the dead and rescue the damsel, seemingly undaunted by the fact his noggin had been nearly sawed in two the previous night. Explains Burr, "The new ending partly came about, I think, because of a test screening in New York. The audience really liked Ken Foree so they decided to bring him back for the next movie. That was the whole thing," Burr sighs, "forget that it doesn't make one bit of damned sense in this movie—they wanted him alive for the next movie. It's so weird he survives the night—getting sawed and all—and he's like 'Hey, it's me!' He's so energetic and everything. I mean, what the fuck is going on? I thought, 'It's a dream, right?' But no, it's real! It was . . . amazing. It was ridiculous, pathetic; it made no sense. I think what this shows is a fundamental lack of respect for the audience of these movies. They're basically saying, 'Screw it . . . it doesn't matter if it makes no sense; the audience doesn't care anyway, they just want the gore.' The people at New Line and many other companies simply have no respect for the horror film but they've made their money from what they consider to be a 'bastard' genre."

After the new ending had been shot the film was further tampered with by paranoid New Liners who had heard from their foreign distributor that "you can not release this movie internationally, it will be banned in every country." Even before the MPAA got a hold of it, a nervous Bob Shaye ordered even more cuts.

"Shaye freaked out," says Burr, "so he comes in and says *this goes, that*



goes . . . and there's no discussion. It was awful, it was totally taken out of everyone's hands. And here's (New Line exec) Sam Ritcher, who hates horror films, going 'that's offensive, that's offensive and . . . o-o-o-o-h, that too!' And, lo and behold, it ends up getting banned in almost every major country anyway," Burr smirks. "After all this and then what happened with the MPAA (the film had to be submitted ten different times before an 'R' rating was finally granted), I wanted my name taken off the film. They said they couldn't do that as they'd already struck 1000 prints of reel one. They also asked if I wanted the credit 'A Jeff Burr Film.' 'No way in hell!' I replied. It's not a Jeff Burr film. I want a credit like that to mean something."

The shit was only beginning to dry on the fan blades when Burr was confronted with yet another new horror—the wrath of the fans who felt unconscionably ripped-off by what was trumpeted as "the most controversial horror film ever."

"I mean, people come up to me and say, 'How could you do that to the film?' I have respect for the audience—I love horror films," says an obviously pained Burr. "I would apologize to them but I've got nothing to really apologize for. I took the job and then they did the right thing by not going to the theater in droves. The 'R' version did not deserve a wide audience. It was just a total rush job, incredibly ridiculous. And, I think honestly, that New Line feels as though they came in and 'saved' the picture with their new ending. Bob Shaye does, I know it. I just wish they had had the guts to release it unrated and fuck the ratings board, but they're a big corporation now and the whole thing was contingent on a video deal. They made a lot of money on that but it had to be an 'R' because RCA doesn't release unrated films. They should've released a real nasty version of it, in four or five hundred theaters and then really play up the

controversy. The international version (with some excised gore scenes restored as well as more character bits) is at least a little more representative of the film I wanted to make. I mean it's no classic, but at least it's not as lousy as the U.S. print."

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**"Their new ending was pathetic, ridiculous. It made no sense."**

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As it stands now, *Leatherface* appears in three distinct versions: New Line's "R" rated U.S. print; an unrated international print (with the same ending as the U.S. release); and Burr's rough cut of the film. The latter version, despite missing the background music and many of the sound effects, is easily the best of the lot. The most obvious differences include: Burr's original ending; much more gore; extended sequences involving the little girl; heavy-duty emphasis on Kate Hodge being nailed to the chair; the booby-trapped impalement of the crispy critter, and Ken Foree's very obvious death at the hands of *Leatherface*. Many of the sequences play much longer and retain a gritty intensity conspicuously absent from the timid "R" rated print. Scenes involving the little girl tripping the sledge-hammer execution device and then draining the blood from Bill Butler's head wound are creepily unsettling and highly subversive. When you see her bring the sauce-filled cup to *Leatherface*, sit on his knee and then kiss him full on the mouth, you can almost hear the sounds of the New Line execs climbing out of their skins.

Though Burr has insisted that many of the gore scenes were radically abbreviated or not filmed at all, one particular kill remains uncompromisingly nasty and numbing, especially in light of the actual circumstances

surrounding the sequence. Before shooting the chainsaw evisceration of the young woman against the tree, the actress requested a short conference with her director. "In the original draft she gets sawed in half from the crotch up, with much lingering on the crotch," says Burr. "Instead of that, I wanted to go straight through her and the tree so that you saw Leatherface through the hole in the tree. Then, she splits apart and falls down to the ground." In the rough cut, the saw does penetrate both the body and the tree, but it is shot so dark that little is revealed. The gore freely flows, though, and Leatherface gets a maskful of chunky gruel in what proves to be the film's most overt splatter sequence. "A funny thing about that, really sick actually," remembers Burr, "is that the actress was pregnant at the time. She told me right before we shot the scene, 'I'm going to be very touchy during this,' and then the whole sequence involves sawing through her stomach. It was very weird, very strange experience—'Mansonesque' even."

Though Burr seems anxious to put the subject of *Leatherface* to rest, he cheerfully admits to being a much wiser filmmaker for the experience. "The good thing that did come out of this movie was a reaffirmation of just what it was I *didn't* want to do," he says. "Things I won't do; like working with people who don't love what they do and have no respect for those who do. I think, ultimately, that *Leatherface* falls into the same category as the remake of *Night of the Living Dead*, I mean, why bother?"

Burr also expresses an almost total sense of disillusionment with the studio system of filmmaking. "My first movie, *The Offspring*, was made very independently and then the next two became progressively more dependent. Now, I'm back to being totally independent again. It's the hardest way to go, but it's the most rewarding." He also has a recipe for what he thinks may be the solution to many of the

maladies that have hobbled the genre for the past five years. "*Silence of the Lambs* proved that if you make a great horror film people will always be interested. But there are so few directors who work continually in the genre—you can name them on one hand. There are so very few that truly love it and don't just use it as a stepping stone. It's going to take a young guy, like a Van Bibber, who'll make a great film from out of nowhere. A kind of breakthrough, low budget effort like *Evil Dead*. It'll be the one little independent film that hits it big. It's the time for it right now because all the big horror franchises have pretty much petered out."

As for Burr's current plans, his own independent production of *Eddie Presley—A Tribute to the King*, is next up. He describes it as "a dark comedy about a homeless Elvis Presley impersonator who is struggling to get a comeback gig. It's very much set in the dark underbelly of Hollywood... of America. We've got a real eclectic cast: Clu Gulagher (*The Offspring*), Ian Ogilvy (*Conqueror Worm*), Dan Rocback and Lawrence Tierney. It's very low budget, we're raising the money and making it ourselves. It's the best way to work. After that, it's *Under Television Skies*, which hopefully, will mark my 'comeback' to the genre. It's a very weird, kind of indescribable, surreal horror film." In addition, Burr was approached to helm yet another sequel to a film that most fans hold in only the highest contempt. "They asked me to come in on... (pause for effect) *Children of the Corn 2*. I replied, 'No way in hell!'"

In conclusion, Burr offers this challenge. "For the genre to survive and prosper, we're going to need a visionary producer or distributor who's willing to back the system and the MPAA and release stuff unrated." Or, as we say here at DR World Headquarters, "THE REDDER, THE BETTER!"

# GORE SCOREBOARD

⌂ Bow-wow

● Nearly worthless

●● Average

●●● Above average

●●●● Classic, Must see

Besides employing the customary and time-tested one-to-four skull rating system in assessing the relative merits of each film, a second numerical rating has been added to supply further information for discerning splatter scholars. This numerical appraisal, based on a scale from one to ten, deals with elements totally unrelated to whatever artistic or aesthetic virtues the film may possess.

The GORE SCORE concerns itself with nothing but the quantity of blood, brains, guts, slime, snot, puke or other assorted precious bodily fluids spilled, slopped or splattered during the course of the film. A simple, straightforward indication of just how moist and meaty the movie really is.

Like this...



TERMS OF ENDEARMENT, GANDHI,  
WILLOW, THREE MEN AND A BABY



DR. BUTCHER M.D., MAKE THEM DIE  
SLOWLY, NEKROMANTIK, CANNIBAL  
HOLOCAUST

REVIEWERS: Chas. Balun (CB), Greg Goodsell (GG), Shane M. Daltman (SMD), Walter Gay (WG), Graham Rae (GR), Peter Orr (PO).

## INDUSTRIAL SYMPHONY NUMBER ONE (1989)

d. David Lynch



Even if **WILD AT HEART** left you sick to your stomach and felt like the final episode of *Twin Peaks* would have been hooted off the screen at a student film festival, this video feature may temporarily reinstate you into the "Lynch mob." Returning to the spooky, post-apocalyptic atmosphere of **ERASERHEAD**, **SYMPHONY** shows Lynch-pin singer Julee Cruise wailing

new-agey, Sixties' pop songs in a taffeta ball gown against what appears to be a nuked industrial backdrop. Dancers fly through the air à la Peter Pan, Cruise floats about like Glenda, the Good Witch of the West via skillful stagecraft as the audience is left with bits and pieces of what seems like a failed romance. Hence the subtitle, "Dream of the Brokenhearted." Laura Dern, Nicolas Cage and the Man from Another Place all put in cameos. Just to make sure we're kept on guard through the dreamy, pastoral-like musical numbers, David throws in one particular nasty shock sure to have all couch po-

tatoes bolting suddenly upright. In addition, Lynch features his most disturbing, twisted creation yet (which is really sayin' somethin'); the Tall Skinned Deer. Highly worthwhile.

(GG)

## **GREAT WHITE (aka THE LAST SHARK) (1981)**

*d: Enzo G. Castellari*



This is it: JAWS rip-offs come and JAWS rip-offs go, but this is the one Universal Pictures took special offense at and litigated off the shelf. That's enough to make anyone who hasn't seen it more curious than he would have been if the fuss hadn't been raised. And yes, curious ones, there are ways to beat the system and see this film. Enough said—you know what you have to do. So how is it? Well, despite many similarities, this is *not* the scene-by-scene remake it's rumored to be. Though James Franciscus in the Roy Scheider role and Vic Morrow as a surrogate Robert Shaw go through their paces in the traditional pattern, this film features a shark determined to put his own personality on the map. In the movie, he has a special affinity for sailboarders: one of the best scenes has him greedily crashing one of their gatherings and bowling them over like ninepins. Meanwhile, outside the movie, the shark reportedly commanded some attention when he actually ate one of the film crew! Somewhat surprisingly, this incident wasn't used in the final edit, which effectively mixes footage of the real shark with a mock-up that comes off better than the ones in the last two authentic JAWS films. In fact, everyone I know who's seen GREAT WHITE found it more entertaining as a *whole* than the last two JAWS films. Perhaps jealousy was Universal's motive? In any case, any aficionado of these Italian "rip-offs"

can tell you that at the very least, they keep things moving, and this film is fair of its type, so your personal taste and curiosity will have to determine your next move.

(SMD)

## **THE NEW GLADIATORS (1983)**

*d: Lucio Fulci*



Speaking of Italian "rip-offs," if Universal could successfully suppress GREAT WHITE, Fulci & Co. should be equally entitled to shelve 1987's THE RUNNING MAN (just the movie, certainly not Stephen King's pseudonymous novel). Perhaps a violent futuristic game show isn't anything new—I'm sure you can name plenty of films to use that idea—but what about the character of a popular hero framed for a crime he didn't commit in order to force him to participate in the game? Or a female compatriot possessing a recording of what really happened? Hmm? I know it's hopeless to try to start something here, but it feels better just to let it out. Which leaves us with the movie. Do not prepare for this one by watching such previous Fulci efforts as THE GATES OF HELL and THE BEYOND. Watch a handful of comic book efforts from folks like Sergio Martino (AFTER THE FALL OF NEW YORK) or Steven Beason and Kevin Mancuso, who are both actually Joe D'Amato/Aristide Massaccesi (ENDGAME, 2020 TEXAS GLADIATORS), then sit back and watch Lucio swing with the best of them as he puts Jared Martin and Fred Williamson through a series of colorful, exciting gladiatorial battles which also involve such familiar faces as Italian horror regulars AJ Cliver and Donald (DR. BUTCHER) O'Brien. Fulci also manages to get in one or two hallucinatory splatter scenes, just in case you forget who's running this show, along with other bits of assorted weirdness

(ranging from whistling assassins to holograms ninjas). The man who brought you ZOMBIE doesn't let his "fun" side out that often—take advantage of this playful, entertaining package and let Arnold think he did it first. (SMD)

## WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SOLANGE? (1971)

d: Massimo Dallamano



A black-clad murderer prowls a girl school and cuts down the student population in this overlong, occasionally striking Italian/German production. The police are dense and slow enough to ensure a high body count. Noble girls are beaten, choked, drowned in bathtubs—and worse. Misogynists will love the many shots of long-bladed knives being rammed up the victims' kazoos. Almost as unsettling are gory police photos of the corpses and an X-ray of a girl's pelvis with a blade crammed way up there. The bloodletting is revenge for a heinous act in the past, an impromptu kitchen table abortion. Fabio Testi stars; Camille Keaton is unappealing as the title character. Available stateside in Italian and French-language versions only, but the perversion and grossness easily bridge any language barrier. Successful enough to spawn a nasty sequel, WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOUR DAUGHTERS?

(WG)

## VAMPIRE HOOKERS (1979)

d: Cirio H. Santiago



The ads proudly blared "Warm blood isn't all they suck!" Two simpleton sailors in the Philippines run afoul of poetry-spouting master vampire John Carradine and his bevy of bloodsuck-

WARM BLOOD ISN'T ALL THEY SUCK!



ing beauties. Not much in the gore department but the flesh makes up for the lack of blood. Bad one-liners vie with gaffes for equal time. Check out the tan-lines on one vampiress who hasn't been out in the sun since the 1800's. The head vampire expounds on the fact that Walt Whitman and William Shakespeare were vampires; only Carradine could recite such lines with any degree of conviction. Also featured: a fat flatulent vampire-in-training (Phillipine trash film regular Vic Diaz) who, at one point, blows the lid off his coffin. Reissued as SENSUOUS VAMPIRES ("They Kiss And Tease But They Always Please!"). Worth it's weight in Fool's Gold under either title.

(WG)

## THE SLASHER (1976)

d: Robert Mantero



A manic photographs unfaithful women doing the featherbed jig with their lovers, then stabs and slashes them and leaves the photos on their butchered corpses. Farley Granger investigates, then gets a call from the killer saying *his* wife is next. Will Granger bother to save her or not. I know *I* wouldn't. Lots of graphic drawn-out knife attacks and their aftermaths are featured, with loving close-ups of breast and throat wounds. One abysmally tasteless scene has a crippled cuckold taking a dive down a staircase, crutch and all. Poorly acted, badly dubbed with repetitive dialogue, sure to offend everyone on one level or another. Distributor William Mishkin made a bad film seem worse by retitling it **THE SLASHER IS THE SEX MANIAC!** He later cut in porn footage, rechristened the mess **PENETRATION** and promoted it as an all-new X film starring Granger, Sylvia Koscina, Harry Reems and Kim Pope. Unbelievable.

(WG)

## MEET THE FEEBLES (1990)

d: Peter Jackson



From the New Zealand director of the near-classic **BAD TASTE** comes what is, in all probability, the world's first porn/gore/fetish/coprophilia puppet movie. A sleazy, sick (but truly brilliant) parody of *The Muppets*, **FEEBLES** dares to go where few have gone (especially with puppets) and few will go in years to come.

The plot is deceptively simple—the world-famous *Feebles* variety act ("Animal acts/and other attractions/ Samantha the pussy'll/show you some action" as their theme song puts it) is seen here in their last twelve hours of rehearsal before their first-ever edition of the *Feebles Variety Hour* is due to be screened. In this time we encounter many sleazy denizens of this

surreal world: Wynard the junkie knife-throwing frog (who has 'Nam flashbacks) whose withdrawal symptoms are so bad (and so hilarious—I nearly peed myself) that he accidentally kills his assistant; Trevor the sleazy rat, who spends his days making porno films in the basement (a cow-and-cockroach-fucking epic is to be known as "Anal Antics"); Dennis the panty-sniffing aardvark; Harry the bed-hopping bunny ("They don't call it bunnylingus for nothing!") with the social disease to end all social diseases; Sebastian, the effeminate fox choreographer whose attempts to save the show result in him singing a song about sodomy on live television ("Open up your ring/and try it front to bum . . . bum bum . . . bum bum bum bum bum!"); and Bletch, the drug-dealing producer of the show who gets blow-jobs from foxy little cat Samantha in order to further her career.

There are many other characters, for too many to mention here, but basically what it all adds up to is a work of unparalleled comedy genius. Jackson seems to be one of only a select few filmmakers not afraid to stick their neck out when it comes to getting their own jaundiced world view down on celluloid (the only other two I can think of are Jorg Butgereit, whose **NEKROMANTIK 2** is apparently just as sick as the first, and recent Lucio Fulci). For this thankless task the film now lies in limbo, with distributors leery of how to put out a film so obviously meant to offend as many people as possible. This is nothing short of criminal in my book (although there have been reports that the film might be released in Britain as . . . wait for it . . . **BAD TASTE 2!**), as great work like this deserves to be seen and embraced. Good going on you, Pete, hope you keep up the good work and keep churning out class acts like this . . . the celluloid world'll be a much

poorer place if you don't. Oh, and about the "10" on the Gore Scoreboard—the film ends with a gory machine-gun bloodbath worthy of Sam Peckinpah at his splatteriest. Thank God for conscientious filmmaker s.

(GR)

## THE SCREAMING DEAD (1972)

d. Jess Franco



Dr. Jonathan Seward drives a silver stake into Count Dracula and turns him into a dead bat. Dr. Frankenstein plans to revive and enslave Dracula; he finds the bat in a coffin (along with a wooden stake in an amazing continuity gaffe.) He sends his pasty-faced monster out to abduct a dancing girl and uses her blood to bring back Drac. Animal rights activists will love this effect, which involves drowning a vampire bat in a beaker of blood. Frankenstein's moronic servant fondles the girl's corpse before shoving it in a blazing oven. Howard Vernon as a green-faced Dracula comes back with some of his girlfriends and together they start draining the locals. A gypsy woman with an unspecified grudge against Frankenstein and Dracula sics a werewolf on them and the creatures have a free-for-all in an unbelievable conclusion. Dennis Price, who plays Dr. Frankenstein, had hit the skids and was dying of alcoholism when he did this picture; but then, why else would such a gifted actor do a Franco flick? European prints are allegedly fleshier and bloodier, but fans of monster rallies on a Woolworth's budget will love Wizard Video's release anyway. Known in Europe as DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN; not to be confused with Al Adamson picture, which is a story in itself.

(WG)

## MUTATOR (1989)

d. John R. Bowey



THE BONEYARD featured a monstrous, drooling toy poodle, MUTATOR features a monstrous, drooling kitty cat! The kitty cat in question is only less ludicrous than the killer pussy in Greydon Clarke's THE UNINVITED (1988), a soft sculpture creation that dared the viewer not to keel over in hysterical laughter as it vomited out a malicious puppet to terrorize a luxury yacht full of fave grade-Z actors. The ferocious feline in MUTATOR is a musclemán wearing white fake fur remnants atop a Big Daddy Roth head. Oh, the plot? An evil corporation housed in a labyrinth office building is conducting nefarious animal experiments, the daughter of the evil corporation's CEO sneaks in late at night with some animal rights activist friends, good scientists, bad scientists, something is killing and shedding over everybody, they have to get out, but they can't get out... add to this the casting of the modern cinema's most odious villain, Brion James (BLADE RUNNER, FLESH + BLOOD) as the film's hero, and you get the general impression. To it's credit, MUTATOR features a scene involving a room full of (phony) mutilated laboratory animals that I found extremely upsetting (I find flicks such as SALÓ and IN A GLASS CAGE poetic works worthy of leisurely contemplation), all the more reason to leave it moldering in the video litter box.

(GG)

## MADONNA (1990)

d. Alain Zaloum



Lovely Deborah Mansey is a Canadian model with an axe to grind. While

she was a wee lass in pigtails, the court found her poppa guilty of murder and sent him to death row. Like father, like daughter situations ensue as she uses her voluptuous modern day self to ruin the lives of the surviving jury members. MADONNA is an unremarkable murder mystery masquerading as a horror film; there's no real mystery, no real suspects, and most noticeably, no real pay-off. The story is resolved by a last-minute shoot-out of all the major characters. Director Zaloum, in particular, films actors in front of sterile white-on-white walls so consistently that the viewer begins to wonder if they're watching the sequel to George Lucas's THX-1138. Attempts at excitement, entertainment and eroticism stall in MADONNA, just as assuredly as a compact car stranded to the side of a snowbound road in Montreal.

(GG)

### WHISPERS (1990)

d. Douglas Jackson



Cheez, what happened to actress Victoria Tennant? She was so good in FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC (1987) as the wicked mother, content to leave her children to starve to death in their grandmother's Victorian mansion. In this adaptation of the Dean R. Koontz novel (unlike Stephen King, ALL film adaptations of his work stinks—WATCHERS, DEMON SEED), Tennant stares at the camera with nary an expression crossing her brow. Chased by mad killers, mysteries deepening all around her, loved ones getting murdered right and left . . . Victoria's only response is one of non-committal resignation. Which is really too bad, 'cause WHISPERS had potential; good production values, a clever plot involving murderous twins and small town evil, good actors—as well as a sub-plot involving

necrophilia, sure to make list-writing completist nerds scrambling to add this title to their ever expanding tallies. WHISPERS flounders, and ultimately flops on the basis of Tennant's non-acting. Be on the look-out, however for a stand-out, delightful performance by (*don't have her name, where are my notes?*) as a retired brothel keeper, who simultaneously injects the right aura of levity and depravity so vital to power the story along. See, Victoria? This lady does a great job even those she's stuck in a straight-to-video number just like you.

(GG)

### NIGHT LIFE (1989)

d. David Acomb



Fawning quotes from the editor of a certain monster movie magazine come adorning the box for this zombie outing. F-I-U-sssssh, credibility. *Did he see this thing?* NIGHT LIFE is by-the-numbers "Chiller Theater" exercise that will have viewers under the age of twelve going, "But what about—?" An abused high school dork handles who works at a small town mortuary is handling the funeral chores for the quartet of jocks and cheerleaders who made his life miserable (all four were wiped out in a convenient car wreck) when they up and decide to reanimate. They chase him and his girlfriend around the boneyard, they chase him out in the forest, etc., etc. NIGHT LIFE is fun, adequately produced, but no big deal. Some of the details of the work involved in the mortuary are morbidly fascinating, but left undeveloped. Why hasn't anyone else exploited on film the universal qualms we feel on the machineries of our last big event? The only other aspect that is notable of NIGHT LIFE is the yeoman work of actor John Astin as the mortuary's cranky owner. I can't imagine them remaking the ADDAMS



FAMILY without Astin's own brand of avuncular, oily charm.

(GG)

### HELLGATE (1989)

d: William A. Levey



HELLGATE is that special breed of motion picture... along with RUN-AWAY NIGHTMARE and IGOR AND THE LUNATICS that defy criticism and encapsulation; it merely exists. Fair warning is given to those who remember Ron Pallilo of TV's "Welcome Back Kotter" fame; Pallilo played Horschak, the unkempt, braying geek of Kotter's class of "sweetthogs." John Travolta, another "Kotter" alumni only just recently came forth from "semi-retirement" to star in baby-poo comedies. Pallilo thus far has remained inactive, until this opportune, clandestine moment. As it is, he plays the romantic lead and has a nude love scene with a female actress only slightly less repulsive than he still is. HELLGATE's plot disintegrates around a mysterious Western ghost village full of zombies protecting a magical asteroid that makes things explode and the dead return to life; I think. To merely list HELLGATE's shortcomings would only waste ink and inspire the morbidly curious to rent it. If Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder of Mel Brooks' THE PRODUCERS were to bankroll a straight-to-video horror picture, this *would-be-it!* To those who disregard such warnings or take these as backhanded commendations, we say now for the record: *we told ya so.*

(GG)

### DR. GORE (1971?)

d: Pat Patterson



Filed by a late cohort of H.G. Lewis, this two-bit terror was in limbo

for many years; maybe it should have stayed there. Patterson is amusing in the title role as he and his Igor-ish assistant hack pieces off various women and sew them together in an attempt to create a perfect mistress. The first half ranks high on the Massacre Meter, with spilled blood and hewn limbs aplenty. Unfortunately, the movie runs out of outrages long before it runs out of film. The last part is a real drag, padded out with flashbacks and one putrid love song. Introduced by a barely intelligible Herschell Gordon Lewis, who thankfully is more eloquent off-camera than on. The same plot was done better, and funnier, in FRANKENHÖCKER. An oddity for indiscriminate collectors only.

(WG)

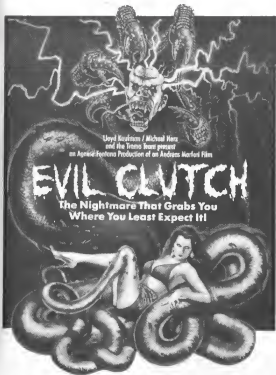
### DOCTOR DEATH, SEEKER OF SOULS (1973)

d: Eddie Sacta



This one has been a shadowy legend for years among bad-film fanatics. John Considine hams it up as a thousand-year-old wizard who survives by transferring his soul from one body to another—never mind that the victims have been terminally injured when murdered prior to transfer. Considine has sideline-switching souls from disfigured bodies into beautiful ones. The souls are fully clothed. The villain and his hideous assistant Thor (played by a Hogan's Heroes refugee) saw a girl in half. People are graphically stabbed and faces are routinely corroded with acid. The ending is one of the doofiest ever. Stoogemaniacs either hate this film or get a big kick out of it since it features Moe Howard in his last role, as a dirty old necrophile. Considine's legions of fans saw him the next year in another gem called THE THIRSTY DEAD.

(WG)



Lloyd Kaufman / Michael Herz  
and the Troma Team present  
an Apical Fentrone Production of an Andreas Marfori Film

# EVIL CLUTCH

The Nightmare That Grabs You  
Where You Least Expect It!

## EVIL CLUTCH (1988)

d: Andreas Marfori (Uncut  
version)



This Pastaland *Evil Dead* wanna-be benefits equally from both director Marfori's audacious sense of style as well as its unswerving commitment to the time-proven precepts of the low-brow gore film. So, when continuity

or logic become imperiled, jump cut to the prowling, serpentine, Raimi-styled shaky-cam shots and track right on up to the next gloriously spurtin' stump shot. Nothing wrong with that, either; in fact, *Evil Clutch* is a welcome throwback to the early 80's, when Fulci, D'Amato, Lenzi, Martino, Margheriti and Deodato first became household names to Stateside splatter aficionados.

*Evil Clutch's* slender-thread-of-a-story, that of a young couple vacationing in a secluded forest retreat, is, most assuredly, merely an excuse for Marfori to trot out his impressive arsenal of cinematic slight-of-hand and get right to work. It also provides a feature-length launching for his previous short film, *Gory Sand*, which is less-than-seamlessly integrated into the plot of *Evil Clutch*, significantly contributing to the latter's continuity problems. No matter though, Marfori's hyper-kinetic direction, Marco Isoli's soaring, dizzying camerawork and composer Adriano Vitali's slashing, Tangerine Dream-styled soundtrack more than make up for the film's lack of substantial caloric value.

The uninhibited, but choosy FX are straight from the *Dr. Butcher* catalog with a healthy nod to the rampaging vegetation seen in *Evil Dead*. We also get a gore-spewing cuckoo clock along with standard issue demon-inspired barfing and drooling, but several bits involving multiple dismemberment, fishhooks-in-the-face, ruptured noggins and bravura chainsaw eviscerations push the Gore Score to the max. (Beware the "R" version.)

Deliciously dumb fun. Highly recommended to those whose lives were unalterably transformed by *Zombie's* splinter-in-the-eyeball sequence.

(CB)



## DON'T MESS WITH MY SISTER (1989)

d: Meir Zarchi



You might reasonably expect something just a little . . . uh, sleazier or at least gratuitously titillating from the writer and director of *I Spit On Your Grave*, but this recent effort plays more like a well-meaning apology for his earlier transgressions. The simple, knee-jerk mechanics of the plot are certainly reminiscent of *I Spit* but the similarities end right then and there. When a part-time junkyard scrap-tosser has an affair with a puffy, pin-headed belly dancer, his whiny, pecker-wilting wife makes her idiot brothers beat up on him a little while she shrieks insults from the sidelines. The little harpy eventually corners him in said scrapheap, a car blows up and he clamors off into the darkness. What? You're waiting for more? Well, it ends there, just like a blue-balling hand job that leaves you with friction burns and lethal spunk retention.

Though advertised as "Unrated," this gutless gruel would put 'em to sleep at the Disney Channel during prime time.

(CB)



## UN GATTO NEL CERVELLO/ CAT IN YOUR BRAIN/NIGHTMARE CONCERT (1990)

d: Lucio Fulci



Well, now, *here's* an unexpected comeback—Lucio is back on a roll! Resurrected from the hell of celluloid trash-making that nobody gave a shit about (MURDEROCK, AENIGMA, DEVIL'S HONEY, etc.) and *what* a fucking resurrection it is! Fulci rises into international splatter stardom with the balls-out celluloid craziness that characterized his zombie splatter epics of the late seventies/early eighties. So what if this film makes little sense and is completely non-sequential? What do we give a fuck? *Entertainment* is the catch-word here, and it's here in two words: *extreme gore!* Welcome back, Lucio, we knew you could do it!

The "plot?" Well, basically, this film follows the disintegration of a filmmaker into hallucinatory near-madness, and his subsequent attempts to get cured by his shrink. Turns out it's his *shrink* who's doing the murders, and trying to hypnotize his patient into believing it was in fact *him* doing it (I would guess Lucio saw NIGHTBREED that week). But there's the kicker: the film is actually a splatter parody (as well as being one of the goriest to come out of Italy in the last decade, if not the goriest!), and the film director in the film, "Lucio Fulci" is played by . . . Fulci himself! Fucking great! When Fulci's shrink (played in a dreadful, hamola performance by Brett Halsey as "Egon Schwartz," a GHOSTBUSTERS character!) hypnotizes him, it's an excuse for Lucio to kick out the jams. Everywhere he looks there is a gory murder, or a woman undressing (You old leech! You are so fuckin' *classy!*) Chainsaw eviscerations/decapitations, piano-

wire throat slashings, intestines being fed to ravenous pigs, eye-gougings, masses of T & A, graphic knifings, tongue-rippings . . . all and much, much more are present and correct. And I mean *much* more. Seems like some murders herein are ripped off from several unreleasable Italian splatter non-epics, which explains why characters appear only to be butchered seconds later for our edification and entertainment. Ah, well, what the hell, they weren't doing anything anyway but gathering dust.

So there you have it. A complete pile of incomprehensible gory shit to some, a masterpiece of the Italian deity's *oeuvre* to others. A couple of other films Fulci currently has in limbo, DEMONIA and GHOSTS OF SODOM, are apparently filled with extreme splatter, too. Could these just be a warm-up for THE BEYOND 2? We can but hope . . . Lucio, I think you should adopt the song "I Lust For The Disgusting Things In Life" by Peter and the Test Tube Babies as your own personal theme tune. As the most audacious filmmakers around in their twilight years, you've earned it.

(GR)

## LA SETTA/THE SECT (1990)

d: Michele Soavi



"A funny bird is the pelican . . . its beak can hold more than its belly can." Now *here's* a major-league disappointment. After the stylish and ultra-gory sanguinary spillage epic, THE CHURCH, Soavi serves up this somewhat anemic and routine chiller which contains little of the style or audacity we've come to know and love him for (nothing quite as insane as the priest's road-drill suicide from THE CHURCH, for example). Which is a shame, really, because it does contain one or two nice little moments that raise it just slightly ahead of the also-rans.

Anyway, kick-off time. After a sequence set in the Southern California desert in 1971 involving some Manson hippie-types, we're into the present day. A woman enters a building and splatter star John Morghen (looking old and bald) follows her in. He kills her with a knife, and we follow him as he gets on a subway. A pick pocket notices a necklace dangling from Morghen's pocket that he had stolen from the dead girl and he moves in to steal it. He reaches into the pocket . . . reaches deep . . . and pulls out a human heart! That's right, Morghen had removed her old love muscle (pity we didn't see him do it), and the classiest scene in the film ends as Morghen is apprehended by the police and grabs one of their guns, blowing his own brains out with it. Yes, he's down and out yet again!

From there on in, however, it's mostly all downhill as things get talky and boring. Kelly Curtis (Jamie Lee's sister, and she looks a hell of a lot like her famous sibling) comes into town to live with Herbert Lom, who apparently passes on after dropping a beetle on Curtis when she is sleeping (the scene where it crawls up her nose is cringe inducing, recalling the "bug up the nose" scene from *TOTAL RECALL*). From here on in Curtis starts to have some seriously weird dreams/hallucinations, most of which involve her having her neck pecked by a pelican in scenes that could have been lifted wholesale from Fulci's *MANHATTAN BABY*. This eventually results in her giving underwater birth to a baby for the "Sect" of the title, (the Antichrist?), and the film ends.

A lot does happen in between these times, but too much of it is just not worth mentioning—talk and show-off camera sequences abound. There is, however, a nice scene involving a woman having her face ripped off by hooks, a scene that is very reminiscent of *HELLRAISER*, *FACELESS*, and

*TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2*, but it happens so quickly and in long shot so that maximum sanguinary spillage is not achieved. Come on Michele, we know you can do better than this.

(GR)

## DR. CALIGARI (1989)

d. Steven Sayadian, a.k.a.

*Rinse Dream*



Director Sayadian first made his niche in directing stylized porno films such as *NIGHTDREAMS* (1981) and *CAFE FLESH* (1982); his cartoon look has been appropriated and slavishly imitated by less talented flesh merchants (all of the Dark Brothers movies, *NEW WAVE HOOKERS*, et al owe a very heavy debt to him) to Hollywood's Hottest New Talent (you can't tell me Tim Burton hadn't seen Sayadian's stuff when he came up with the pop-expressionist universes of *BEETLEJUICE* and *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*). Damning the torpedoes, "Rinse Dream" set out to make a *Midnight Movie* this late in the inning with a remake of the *CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* (1919).

The original *DR. CALIGARI*, shot in post World War I Germany, was the first "real" psychological horror film as well as a milestone event in the history of motion pictures. It was the first film to engulf the viewer in a universe entirely of the filmmaker's invention (even the fantasies of Georges Méliès sought to reassure viewers with storybook cardboard representations of the real world) with its twisted sets and expressionistic visuals. Theatrically, the Robert Wiene original had a message that is still painfully relevant; the inmates are running the asylum. In remaking the film for the 90's, Sayadian posits his characters in a day-glo universe of dirt and fog. The great-granddaughter of Dr. Caligari

now runs a clinic for the sexually dysfunctional (at the C-aligari I-n-sane A-sylum, get it?) Relatively plotless, characters enter and exit in a series of sketches that illustrate the trivial differences that separate Weimar Germany from Bush America.

In terms of grotesquerie, DR. CALIGARI doesn't skimp. Giant tongues, vaginal orifices in doorways, arms mutating in penises, throbbing television sets, murderous dolls, decapitated heads, brains in jars—the handiwork of DEEP RED alumnus Tim "Gore" Larsen. Plot is mostly disregarded for tableaux of surrealistic horror.

For this reason, many will find the film unwatchable. Actors spout inane poetry ("My husband had an erection once/It was silly, really!") and in general behave as they would as if were instructed to be "artsy." Madeline Reynall, as Dr. Caligari in bullet-shaped brassieres, does little more than posture with a cigarette holder. The ideal audience for DR. CALIGARI will be those who appreciate unconventionality and wish even more uncompromisingly strange visions like it will make it to the screen. Many others will walk out angrily of the repertory theater or hurl the video case against the wall—no exceptions.

Alas, Sayadian has returned to the netherworld of pornography with the shot-on-video numbers NIGHTDREAMS 2 & 3. While containing many trademark touches, these tapes fail on even on the one-handed level. Let's hope Sayadian will find projects more worthy of his cockeyed vision (CAFE FLESH 2 is hotly anticipated) before this idiosyncratic vision winds up merely yet another rinsed dream.

(GG)

## THE LAUGHING DEAD (1989)

d. S. P. Somtow



Novelist, screenwriter, actor and director—Well, *one* out of four ain't so bad. S. P. Somtow, self-proclaimed avant garde composer turned sci-fi writer turned horror scripter, will probably not include this witless, dead-guy debacle on his current resume, but it won't be for lack of trying. Actually, one wonders how the multi-gifted Somtow, author of some 17 novels, (including the just-released *Vampire Junction* and the grotesquely bloated, "werewolf western," *Moon Dance*) found the time to shoot this muddled tale of a lecherous guilt-ridden priest possessed by an ancient Mayan death god amongst a Mexican festival of the . . . you guessed it . . . Well, there's no laughing by film's end, especially at Somtow's boneheaded turn as wise-assed, evil Dr. Um-Tzek, whose groaningly bad jokes while performing sacrificial rites lends new meaning to the term "fuckin' shit." Luckily, Forrest Ackerman, sci-fi writer Ed Bryant and film critic Bill Warren, fare much better in their brief cameos because they keep their mouths shut (Forry's a corpse, and Bryant gets his head run over by a truck). Brief respite from Somtow's Folly is provided by several splashy FX sequences, including an arm-down-the-throat . . . uh, gag, a chunkblowing Caesarian section, a couple head mashings, heart removals and a cheeky, organ exchange ceremony. Good buddy John Buechler supplies the dumb-looking, yawn-inducing beasties seen at film's end adding further fuel to the rumor that Somtow is writing, producing, and scoring JB's upcoming *Dawn of the Dead Ghoulies* for Charles Band Productions.

(CB)

## UNMASKED-PART 25 (1989)

d: Anders Palm



Fittingly clever slasher parody about the disfigured son of a notorious serial killer who is forced to re-examine his world view after he falls in love with a beautiful blind woman (shades of *Toxic Avenger* here). Though much better than most alleged horror-comedies (both intentional and otherwise), *Unmasked* remains a gentle, titillating trifle of a laugh-genre instead of a savage satire on a sub-genre crying out for extinction. The thick accents of the principal players and the poor comic timing of the cast of no-names don't help matters any, but surprisingly enough, this reviewer's finger never touched the fast-forward button once during *Unmasked's* 85 minute running time. Despite the emphasis on gags instead of gore, several sequences in the unrated print provide sauce for the selective.

(CB)

## DER TODESKING (1990)

d: Jorg Buttgereit



The follow-up to the instant classic *Nekromantik*, Buttgereit's second full-length feature (after the short story formats of his earlier works, *Horror Heaven* and *Hot Love*) is interesting in places but is ultimately a big disappointment. It concerns itself with the last hours in the lives of several suicides and murderers, with each of the segments being linked by footage of a real-looking decomposing corpse. The quality of the segments vary wildly, making for a very bumpy trip overall, but it's a trip the likes of which you will never have taken before. Thus we have boring trash like the segment where all we see for several minutes is a view of a bridge with the names of the people who have plummeted to their deaths on



it back-to-back with a segment that ranks as one of the classic pieces of genre filmmaking/parodies I've yet seen. A man joins a video shop and rents out a Nazi atrocity film—*Vera, Death Angel of the S.S.* (a film by Jorg Butti!). He goes home, opens a beer and puts the film on. Into the film-within-a-film comes an androgynous Nazi bitch, who gags a man tied to a wall (Buttgereit himself) and then chops off his dick with a pair of gardening shears on-screen (although this scene was slightly cut for the film's limited British video release by Headpress). But the piece de resistance? Vera retrieves the severed champagne cork and draws a swastika on the unfortunate's chest with it! A great Lisa piss-take. We then cut back to the guy watching the film, whose wife comes in and starts nagging at him relentlessly. So what does he do? Of course! He pulls out a gun and blows her brains across the wall, then grabs a picture frame and frames the sanguinary wall-paper smear! Buttgereit is saying (or appears to be) what some horror fans have been saying for years—splatter is fucking art, man!

But as I said before, not all segments are up to this high standard and the middle section drags badly. The end section, concerning a camera-wearing gunwoman who massacres several people at a rock concert (a segment which owes its existence in equal parts to *Peeping Tom* and *Taxi Driver*) before being killed herself is the only other one even vaguely worth watching. I personally think Buttgereit is a bit lost

without regular collaborator (and brilliant actor) Daktari Lorenz, who doesn't star here, and this shows in the finished product (even though Lorenz contributes to the film's excellent soundtrack). However, fear not—Jorg's new film, *Nekromanik 2* is, by all accounts, as sleazy and sick as its illustrious predecessor. Long live Buttigereit and Teutonic terror! Rob and Betty live on in our hearts!

(GR)

## BEGOTTEN (1989)

d: E. Elias Merhige



Some day technology will let us record our dreams on videotape and disgust one another with them. Until then, we have *Begotten*. If you want someone to describe this mind-pummeling 78-minute epic to you, well, so do I, and I sat through it twice. Everyone's comparing it to *Eraserhead*, but don't believe that for a second.

*Begotten* is a primal collage in grainy black and white. It stuns you, then prevents you from cringing by aiming the violence at forms only marginally recognizable as human. A plot lurks somewhere inside there, but people say the same about *Finnegan's Wake*. If you read what passes for its narrative, you would still have no idea what awaits you. This film does all its work on some recessive subconscious plain. The director told the *Village Voice* he wanted the film to look like it was 2,000 years old, and he succeeded too well. Try to imagine what movies would be like if no one bothered to use the invention of sound for dialogue.

*Begotten* will either mesmerize you or drive you from the theater. And you heard it here first, amigos: Sooner or later, some chump will drop a few blotters and catch this beast at a midnight show, and he'll end up on an anti-drug commercial.

(PO)

## DEATH'S ECSTASY/THE BEAST/LA BÊTE (1975)

d: Walerian Borowczyk



Lurking beneath the world's tackiest video box (a swell lookin' babe in the romantic embrace of the Mint Jelly Man) is that sought after bestiality romance, *The Beast*, making its stateside debut as a mass-release, trash fright flick in disguise. People who rent this 'un expecting some tack costumer in the Naschy/Italo vein will get a rude shock as the first five minutes is graphic hardcore footage of horses fucking! Even those who have chowed down on every last cannibal film will find this bit of verite disturbing, and one worries what will happen next.

In reality, very little. *The Beast*, in all likelihood an extended vignette from this director's *Immoral Tales* of the same year, is a tedious art house number that telegraphs its intentions miles away. The plot, such as it is, concerns the efforts of a noble French family to find a suitable wife for the only son in a dying line of nobleman. The bride, a sweet young thing, has yet to discover that the royal lineage is tinted with unhuman blood, the family cursed by the rape of a great-aunt by a bigfoot-type monster.

*The Beast* plays like a tedious bedroom farce for the most part, and its anxiousness to shock and offend will be wearying to many. Toilet jokes, a gay priest with an eye towards young boys, etc., etc., ho-hum. *The Beast* of the title is shown in flashback frolicking with the girl ancestor in question; none of it is in the slightest bit convincing. As a comedic satire, the film isn't that funny, isn't that erotic, and Borowczyk's direction proves that the line between inspired genius and Jesus Franco is indeed a thin one. Offbeat purists who wish to view a bestiality comedy are advised to seek out Curt McDowell's hysterical, Andy Milligan-tinged *Thundercrack!* (also 1975). Still



others who may want to see the "real thing" are advised elsewhere. Yes, boys and girls, even we have standards.

(GG)

## THE BORROWER (1991—let's hope)

d: John McNaughton



Two breeds of homo sapiens walk the earth: those who bow toward Chicago at noon each day in praise of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, and heathen scum. But you already knew that.

*The Borrower* is the follow-up from McNaughton and producer Stephen Jones. As such, it employed a bold strategy to avoid the overbearing sophomore jinx—it never came out. After the original studio, Atlantic, went down, *The Borrower* followed its distinguished forbear into the void. Consequently, at presstime we cannot promise you'll ever get to see it. Cannon currently owns the rights, but an announced theatrical release has yet to happen.

In any case, let us cheer loud and long that these guys chose to make a straightforward, no-shit monster flick. At the time they shot *The Borrower*, they might have easily traded on their surprise rep among the art farts. Instead they marched deeper into the genre.

And, unfortunately, into the waiting arms of the Hollywood system. Aye, there's the rub. Although both McNaughton and Jones have gone on record claiming they encountered little interference (and actually benefited from executive changeovers that minimized meddling during post-production and editing), one suspects the film has suffered for it.

*The Borrower* is uneven but never unengrossing. At worst it seems derivative of *The Hidden*, due both to its premise and its Kevin Yagher FX. (If *The Hidden*'s lack of hormonal energy

frustrated you, this'll scratch that itch but good.) Overall the film delivers on a level few have in recent memory, and not releasing it during the worst horror drought in centuries ought to cost some West Coast airhead his job.

The titular monster is an alien stranded on earth as punishment for unnamed heinous deeds. His head explodes, so he takes one from scuzzy deer poacher Tom Towles. When that one blows, he needs to borrow another, and so on. Thus, at least in the director's cut, we see much hemoglobin. Wouldn't have cut it back in '83, but hard times make cheap dope better, bro.

Besides, this movie moves. Truly, any complaint has to be with its scattershot quality, because there's not a dull frame in it; one sour note rings when a subplot villain rapes a police-woman, and the story doesn't end so much as stops. So what? Rae Dawn Chong holds her role well, numerous *Henry* in-jokes won't annoy you, and Antonio Fargas steals the show as a street denizen and later, the Borrower. Pre-*Twix Peaks* Madchen Amick figures in a hilarious sequence with the snottiest rock band yet put on celluloid.

If *The Borrower* were their first film, McNaughton and Jones would still be talents to hail.

(PO)

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